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"Better than Beckham"

ANCELOTTI
"Milan's masterplan"

BALLACK
Taking the Michael

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

The trouble with Totti

How Italy fell out of love with Roma's golden boy

WHO'S THE SUGAR DADDY?
The world's biggest-spending clubs revealed (and Chelsea are not even in the top 25)

SCOTLAND'S FINEST HOUR?
Those Euro 2008 shocks in full

PLUS...

Jose Reina
La Liga squad lists
Fernando Redondo
Venezuela

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October 2007

HANDS UP how many people think this season's UEFA Champions League winner will come from outside the big three leagues of England, Italy and Spain. Not very many, I would imagine.

The usual big-name suspects also dominate our list of the 30 highest-spending clubs this summer (starting page 42), and it's a depressing fact of modern footballing life that the rich clubs are getting richer at the expense of their less well-off cousins. Michel Platini is proposing altering the Champions League format to allow entry to more teams from middle-ranking countries in central and eastern Europe. But until UEFA tackles the inequitable distribution of TV income – the richest clubs from western Europe receive the lion's share of the cash – nothing is going to change. But the chances of the UEFA president taking on the combined might of Europe's wealthiest clubs is about as likely as an eastern European team triumphing in the Final next May.

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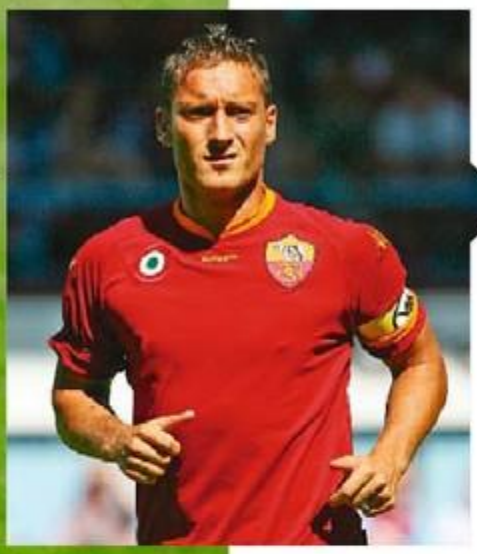

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The 1-0 win in Paris put the Scots on top of their Euro 2008 qualifying group. More, page 86.

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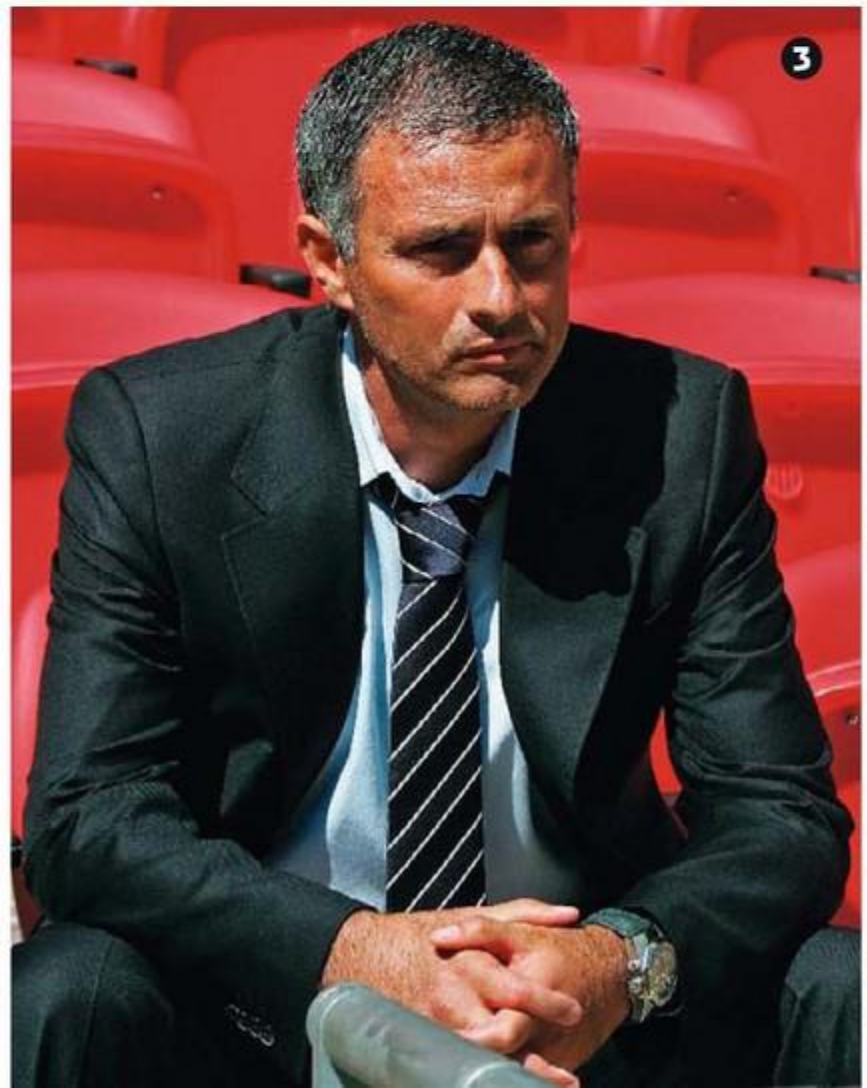
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The Roma star hinted he might. More, page 30.

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THE BIG ISSUE

Should the World Cup qualifying campaign remain regionalised?

Take it global, says Brian Homewood

FOOTBALL IS supposed to be a global game, yet nowadays nearly all the world's best players are in Europe and virtually all the world's top football is played there.

Even friendlies involving African and South American national sides are held in venues such as London, Gothenburg, Montpellier and Barcelona, while European clubs and national sides venture out of their continent only for a lucrative friendly in the USA, Far East or a World Cup. England, for example, have not been to South America since 1984.

Ending the regional divisions for the World Cup qualifying competition could force them to come out of their shells. Suddenly, we would have the prospect of Italy playing in Honduras, England going to Togo, Brazil visiting Iran and so on, providing a break from the endless England v Poland, United States v Costa Rica, Brazil v Ecuador matches. The European Championship, Copa America, African Nations Cup etc would still be there to fuel local rivalries.

Regional preliminaries could be held to weed out the smaller nations, giving them extra match practice, while the bigger nations would go straight into the qualifying competition proper. This could consist, for example, of 15 groups of six teams, which would mean playing only 10 matches over a two-year period, fewer than most teams play now.

Travelling is not an issue here – if leading clubs and national teams can fly half way around the world for a one-off friendly, they can do the same for a World Cup qualifier.

Rematch...England faced Poland again in the qualifiers for 2006

Keep it local, says Tim Vickery

WHEN ENGLAND failed to qualify for two consecutive World Cups in the 1970s, there was outrage in the local press at the presence of such countries as Zaire and Iran at football's main event. The World Cup should be for the best teams in the world, it was argued. Wrongly.

The World Cup should be for the best teams from the various continents that make up the world. When Brazil played Ghana at last year's World Cup I was broadcasting for the BBC's Africa section. Messages of support for the Black Stars poured in from all over the continent. It seemed that the whole of Africa felt itself represented by the Ghanaians.

Now imagine a World Cup without a single representative from Africa – an entire continent disenfranchised.

Of course, that is very unlikely to happen nowadays even under the global qualification system proposed by my greatly esteemed colleague Brian Homewood.

Take the lesson of Zaire in 1974, the first sub-Saharan World Cup contestants. Some of their technique on the ball was impressive but they had no experience of defending against crosses, and their knowledge of the rules was shaky – they were thrown out of control by the Brazilian practice of placing attackers in their defensive wall. It was hardly surprising; they had been kept out of the loop of global football.

These days this same naivety no longer applies to African teams. From the moment that their continent was guaranteed World Cup places they have watched, learned and progressed.

Quite apart from the logistical problems of global qualification, keeping it local is the best way of ensuring that the whole planet is represented at the World Cup, and also allows weaker regions to learn one of the most important lessons in football – that today's defeat, duly absorbed, can pave the way for tomorrow's victory.

● *Continue the debate online at worldsoccer.com/forums*

FROM THE MESSAGE BOARDS

...on the UEFA Champions League Final venue

"There didn't seem to be hassle with tickets at the World Cup, so it's not some impossible ideal to stage one match once a year and get it right. The problem seems to be no one wants to take responsibility for getting it right. UEFA blame the host nation while forgetting it was they who chose the venue."
Posted by "druryfire", September 4

"Perhaps a compromise would be to rotate the Final among a small group of stadia in certain regions e.g. southern Europe (Milan and Madrid), northern (Paris and Munich), eastern (Moscow and Kiev) and the UK (Wembley and Hampden). Each region would get the Final every four years, and each stadium would get it every eight. They would soon each become expert hosts without hogging the limelight. A similar group of (slightly smaller?) stadia in each region could host the UEFA Cup Final (the likes of Vienna, Lisbon, Manchester)."
Posted by "Andy Neill", September 4

"Rather than deny other cities the opportunity to host Europe's showpiece game, surely UEFA would be better advised sorting out their security arrangements. Rationing the number of corporate seats would be a step in the right direction, increasing at a stroke the number of tickets available to the finalists. Also, it can't be that difficult to find a number of stadiums across the continent which satisfy some pretty basic security criteria. The problems in Athens were not caused by the location but because the ground was not equipped to process thousands of spectators – some without tickets – in a short space of time. If UEFA compiled a list of basic security measures to be employed at all major finals, then the scenes that came close to ruining the Athens Final would not be repeated. I still find it unfathomable that UEFA selected a ground that had no turnstiles."
Posted by "Stephen Woodside", September 11

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WHAT WE'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

● Former Chelsea and France centre-back **Frank Leboeuf**, who now lives in Los Angeles, has written a film script with a friend and is busy hawking it round Hollywood moguls. The story reportedly combines sport, science fiction and violence, in the *Rollerball* vein. A possible blockbuster?

● According to Spanish daily *AS*, **Ronaldinho** has asked his agent brother Roberto Assis to find him a luxury flat in London, prompting speculation that the Brazilian may be moving to Chelsea from Barcelona some time soon. To make him even more attractive to potential buyers, Ronnie recently took out Spanish citizenship, meaning he would not take up a "foreign" player berth at clubs in European Union countries.

● **Milan Prso**, a teenage striker with Red Star Belgrade, is attracting much interest from western European clubs. The 17-year-old is a cousin of ex-Monaco, Rangers and Croatia front man Dado Prso.

Scriptwriter...Leboeuf

Money-spinner...Henry with that shirt

● Barcelona have sold 70,000 **Thierry Henry** shirts since the striker arrived at Camp Nou in late June. At £57 each, that means almost £4million has gone into the club's coffers.

● **David Dein**, Arsenal's former vice-chairman, may no longer be welcomed into the boardroom at the Emirates stadium on matchdays but he was in the Tottenham boardroom, as a guest of Spurs chairman Daniel Levy, on the day of the recent derby at White Hart Lane.

● AZ Alkmaar coach Louis Van Gaal dropped **Ryan Donk** from the starting line-up against Vitesse Arnhem after the defender, who had arrived early at the stadium for the afternoon game, had decided to watch the first half of an AZ youth match taking place nearby. Van Gaal termed it "unprofessional behaviour", reasoning that sitting in the midday sun watching a match was not the best preparation.

Brian Glanville

...on why Chelsea's crisis could be football's redemption ... the power struggle at Arsenal...and the "lucky" injuries that allowed Barry and Wright-Phillips to shine for England

FOR JOSE MOURINHO, the writing was all too plainly on the wall when Roman Abramovich, seeing Aston Villa score their second goal against Chelsea in a 2-0 league win, turned his back on the game and flounced out of the directors' box. Though Mourinho for me has been a rotten loser, an arrogant accuser, never ready to accept that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, he remains one of the outstanding managers of his day.

It is hard, alas, to forget his absurd and disgraceful outburst against referee Anders Frisk and Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard after Chelsea had lost away to the Catalans in the Champions League first knockout round first leg in February 2005. Hard to forget how Rijkaard put Mourinho to shame after the return at Stamford Bridge when Chelsea prevailed thanks to a blatant, unpunished foul on Barca keeper Victor Valdes.

Yet in the good old spirit of *schadenfreude*, I'm delighted by what had happened, convinced as I am that Abramovich's boundless riches have been a disaster for English football, unbalancing the Premiership and those other competitions Chelsea enter. UEFA president Michel Platini, in his naive eagerness, has appealed to Gordon Brown and others to halt the flow of millionaire money into European football. But his belief that all these Croesuses are only in football for the money is made nonsense by the example of Abramovich and his hyperbolic subsidies to Chelsea.

Chelsea's hubris at executive level seems to have no bounds. The egregious chief executive, Peter Kenyon, has made the ludicrous demand that Chelsea win the European Cup twice in 10 years. There speaks the money man who knows nothing of football.

Mr Glum...Abramovich watches Chelsea go down at Aston Villa

There can be no doubt that Chelsea, however dully they have been playing of late, will seriously miss Mourinho and his rapport with the players. Meanwhile, the implication that money cannot buy you everything is deeply reassuring. Chelsea's crisis is potentially football's redemption.

WHAT OF Arsenal, successful on the field, in constant conflicting news off it? The more we hear and know, the more sure it seems that the key to future ownership lies with former diamond merchant Danny Fiszman, still the club's largest shareholder.

And what about former vice-chairman David Dein and Uzbek Alisher Usmanov? Dein was eased off the board by fellow directors displeased by his negotiations with American Stan Kroenke, with whom it now seems there has been a cooling. But now Dein has sold his 14.58 per cent stake to Usmanov for a staggering £75million. Not bad when you recall that he originally bought his tranche for £292,000.

The former vice-chairman warns that the club, deeply in debt after their move to the vast new Emirates stadium, which he opposed, won't be able to compete in the transfer market with the other leading clubs. But do they need to? Dein's friend Arsene Wenger has now decided to stay with the Gunners and is well satisfied with his present team, even though it has lost the dazzling Thierry Henry.

Shrewd transfers have been completed without excessive costs, the last coup being at the expense of Chelsea with the acquisition from the Blues of vigorous young France midfielder Lassana Diarra.

Cesc Fabregas has been a stupendous success, just as Wenger had predicted he would be – to the surprise of some of us – after Patrick Vieira had gone. Emmanuel Adebayor is a dangerous, rapid centre-forward; Robin Van Persie, whose injury last season took much of the gloss off the attack, is now up and emphatically running; Denilson and Abou Diaby have added youth and drive to midfield; new signing Eduardo da Silva has further reinforced the attack; and there is also Theo Walcott. Wenger has every right to be pleased with his team, all of whom, as he recently emphasised, were chosen by himself. Could he perchance have been thinking of Chelsea and Roman Abramovich?

> "There can be no doubt that Chelsea, however dully they have been playing of late, will seriously miss Mourinho"

Lucky break...Gareth Barry took full advantage of his call-up for England against Israel

STEVE McCLAREN, however briefly, rode his luck and got off the hook at Wembley, albeit against a passive and mediocre Israeli side in the Euro 2008 qualifiers.

McClaren's luck was the injuries to David Beckham, Frank Lampard and Owen Hargreaves, which allowed Shaun Wright-Phillips to show his prowess on the right wing and Gareth Barry to start an England game again at long last.

I have for many years been an

Read Glanville every week at worldsoccer.com/glanville

admirer of Barry, his skills, his positional sense, his splendid left foot. McClaren gave him a run-out as a substitute in the friendly against Germany in August, but had Lampard or Hargreaves been available, he would not have started against Israel.

And how admirably he played. True, he had more time and room than better opponents would have given him, and there was little need to defend. But from the very first he was using the ball with skill and sometimes flair, coolly interchanging central positions with Steven Gerrard – never happy when paired with Lampard – and sending in insidious crosses, especially inswingers from the right. The beautifully studied ball with which Barry set up Michael Owen for England's second goal was exceptional. Later came the corner, an inswinger from the right, from which Micah Richards headed England's third.

This was only Barry's fourth start for England, the first coming as long ago as the regime of Kevin Keegan. Sven Goran Eriksson ignored him, reportedly because he thought him too slow. Well, he is hardly a speedster, but what goes on in the head can be as important as what goes on in the feet, and Barry, whether at left-back, in left midfield, his preferred role, or central midfield, seems always to see things fast.

Against Russia four days later, Barry had an even finer game, ridiculing those who averred that it needed a Hargreaves to play the "holding" midfield role. Once more, Barry played with supreme economy and intelligence, whether bailing out the defence or when on the attack.

Beckham's absence at last cleared the way for a genuine right-winger, Wright-Phillips, to play, taking people on, beating them with skill and speed, providing a blessed dynamism denied the team when the former captain plays. In the Germany friendly, McClaren inexplicably kept Beckham – due in his folly to play for Los Angeles Galaxy in California the following day – on the field throughout. This obliged Wright-Phillips, a second-half substitute, to play on the left on his weaker foot, although he did very well there. Restored to the right against Israel, he tormented their defence with his pace and control, and snatched an excellent opening goal, timing his run perfectly to beat the offside trap.

Beckham, in his arrogant belief that at 32 and with injury problems he could play those two successive games, has inevitably paid the penalty. If Galaxy are wondering what possessed them to offer Beckham so much money, then he must be wondering what possessed him to go. ●

QUOTES & NOTES

Who said what and why

Sunny side down...Mourinho

"Some eggs are more expensive than others and some give you better omelettes. So when the best eggs are in Waitrose and you cannot go there, you have a problem."

Jose Mourinho uses a bizarre analogy to criticise Chelsea's lack of transfer spending a few days before his departure.

"It was a very villainous gesture. I'm going to demand an explanation from him."

Juventus coach Claudio Ranieri after defender Jonathan Zebina attempted to slap a steward following his dismissal against Cagliari.

"What pleased me least was that they told me by telephone."

Fabio Capello keeps the pot boiling about his sacking by Real Madrid.

"Brother, we'll never forget you."

The message to Sevilla's Antonio Puerta revealed on the undershirt of Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos during a goal celebration in the 5-0 win over Villarreal. The defender received a booking, later rescinded, for removing his team shirt.

"From now on we'll be playing with 12 men. We'll be invincible."

Sevilla president Jose Maria Del Nido claims his team will draw strength from the Puerta tragedy.

"Everybody knows he's a great player but also that he can be frightened."

Real Madrid defender Fabio Cannavaro claims new Barcelona forward Thierry Henry does not appreciate the rough stuff.

"Hull is God's will."

Nigerian star Jay Jay Okocha seeks to explain his shock decision to join English second level club Hull City.

"In pre-season we had the recipe. Now we have the chef too."

Galatasaray striker Hakan Sukur cooks up an analogy to praise the team's new Brazilian midfield general, Lincoln.

"It would be extremely short-sighted if I stepped down now."

Ajax coach Henk Ten Cate after failing to steer the side into the Champions League group stage for the second season running, this time exiting at the hands of unfancied Slavia Prague.

Tribute to Puerta...Sergio Ramos

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

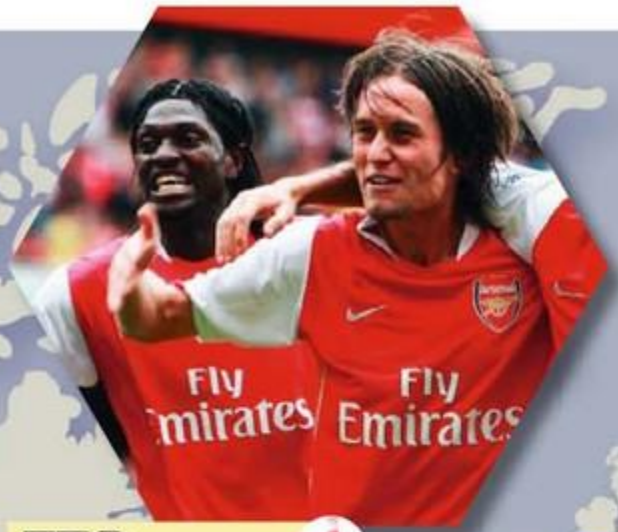
FOREIGN PLAYERS

A league-by-league guide

90

MEXICO

The number of foreign players in the first division. Each club is allowed to have six foreigners, with five allowed on the field at any one time.



338

ENGLAND

The number of foreign players in the Premiership, an average of 16.9 per club. The figure includes 41 players from the home nations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Arsenal and Birmingham have most foreigners, 23 each, followed by Bolton on 22 and Liverpool and Fulham both on 21. Derby, Middlesbrough and West Ham have the fewest, 12 each.

198

ITALY

The number of foreigners in Serie A, an average of 9.9 per club. Internazionale have the most, 23. Empoli have the fewest, three.

23

BRAZIL

The number of foreigners in the national championship. Only two of them are not from South America – Serb Dejan Petkovic at Santos and Angolan Johnson at Goias. Eight clubs – Parana, Figueirense, Juventude, Atletico Mineiro, Fluminense, Botafogo, Sport Recife and America – have no foreign players.

209

FRANCE

The number of foreign players in Ligue 1, an average of 10.5 per club. Metz, with 21, have the most; Lorient have fewest, six.

174

RUSSIA

The number of foreign players in the top division, an average of 10.8 per club. The figure includes 65 players from former Soviet republics. Rubin Kazan have the most foreigners, 18; Luch-Energiya of Vladivostok have the fewest, six.

184

SPAIN

The number of foreigners in La Liga, an average of 9.2 per club. Sevilla have the most, 19, followed by Real Madrid with 16 and Barcelona with 15. Athletic Bilbao have none – they still have a Basques-only policy.

237

GERMANY

The number of foreign players in the Bundesliga, an average of 13.1 per club. Nurnberg have the most, 19, Hansa Rostock the fewest, nine.

60

JAPAN

The number of foreign players in the J.League, 43 of them Brazilians. Only one club, Nagoya Grampus Eight, has no Brazilian players.

28

AUSTRALIA

The number of foreign players in the A-League. They include Brazilians Mario Jardel, once of Porto, and former Middlesbrough midfielder Juninho, and Dutchman Bobby Petta, once of Ipswich and Celtic.

HEADLINERS

People in the news...on and off the pitch

Toni Kroos
Bayern's Under-17 World Cup star

GERMANY

BAYERN MUNICH splashed out a club record £47.3 million this summer on the "names" judged essential by general manager Uli Hoeness to put them back in command of German, if not European, club football. But the arrival and early success of Franck Ribery, Miroslav Klose, Luca Toni et al has meant that the emergence of a young talent with potential to match has gone comparatively unnoticed.

Toni Kroos, Germany's captain, was voted best player at the Under-17 World Cup in South Korea. He had looked like an old-fashioned playmaker in the way he guided his team from midfield, creating four assists. He also hit five goals – two in the second group match against Ghana, one against England in the quarter-finals and Nigeria in the semis, and an excellent free-kick strike during the 2-1 third-place play-off victory over the Ghanaians.

Kroos, born on January 4, 1990, was lured to Munich last year after growing up in youth football with Hansa Rostock. He is already being written up as a "new Michael Ballack", though his own hero is French midfielder Johan Micoud, formerly with Werder Bremen.

Kroos says modestly: "I'm not the kind of person to get worked up about things. I enjoy playing football and that's about it. I'm no one special."

Others disagree. Bayern keeper Oliver Kahn has described Kroos as "the best footballer I've seen come up through the youth ranks in years". No wonder Bayern have promised him the No 10 shirt next season – precisely why no one is wearing the number this term.

Keir Radnedge

Best on show...Kroos was voted player of the tournament in South Korea

Antonio Puerta
Football unites in mourning the death of Sevilla's young defender

SPAIN

Together in grief...Del Nido and Lopera

THEY CALLED it Puerta's miracle. Spanish football was united by the death of the Sevilla left-back at the age of 22, three days after suffering multiple heart attacks during his side's victory over Getafe on the opening day of the season.

Tributes poured in from all over the country and overseas, players celebrated goals by pointing to the heavens in his honour, minutes of silence were held and, for once, impeccably observed, and footballers took to the field in Puerta shirts: the entire Barcelona side came on to the pitch in Sevilla No 16 shirts before a friendly against Internazionale, while Real Madrid emerged from the tunnel at Villarreal in the League wearing T-shirts bearing his image.

At the European Super Cup between Milan and Sevilla in Monaco, Milan's Kaka dedicated his goal to the defender, while team-mate Clarence Seedorf took off his team shirt to point to Puerta's name on his undershirt and received warm applause from the Sevilla fans. At the Under-17 World Cup in South Korea, the Spanish players dedicated a victory to him. A week later, the senior national side came out wearing Puerta shirts before the game against Iceland in the Euro 2008 qualifiers.

But the real miracle was in Seville itself. The city, normally deeply divided in terms of football, where the derby is invariably marred by violence, was united in grief. Betis players were among the first to visit Puerta in hospital, Betis fans lay flowers outside Sevilla's Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in his honour, and Sevilla fans showed their appreciation by chanting "Betis! Betis!" as, together, the supporters waited for the funeral cortege to pass. In the Betis club shop, the name and number that outsold all others was "Puerta, 16".

Even more striking was the image of Sevilla president Jose Maria del Nido and Betis owner Manuel Ruiz de Lopera embracing tearfully at the Sanchez Pizjuan. Last season, there was a punch-up in the Betis directors' box after Del Nido refused to sit anywhere near a bust of Lopera (who wasn't at the game). And Lopera had vowed never to set foot in Sevilla's stadium. The hug was top story in news bulletins and pictured on newspaper front pages all over Spain.

"The city of Seville has lost a wonderful person," Lopera said. "Antonio has sent us a message of unity from up in heaven. It is time to end the conflict between our clubs."

The tragedy is that if peace really has broken out in Seville, it has come at such a terrible cost.

Sid Lowe

Prelude to tragedy...Puerta is helped off the field at Sanchez Pizjuan. Inset: candles burn in tribute outside the stadium following the news of his death

Avram Grant
Abramovich's Israeli "friend" faces an uphill struggle at Chelsea

ENGLAND

AVRAM GRANT is on a hiding to nothing after succeeding Jose Mourinho at Chelsea. If he wins matches and titles, then the plaudits will not be for him but for "Jose's team"; if he loses matches then he will not last more than a few weeks.

The 52-year-old does not have the CV for any Premier League club, let alone one with the global ambitions of Chelsea.

Grant was coach of Maccabi Tel Aviv (1991-1995 and 1997-2000), Maccabi Haifa (2000-02) and Israel (2002-05). There followed his initial, controversial move to England with Portsmouth, where he was technical director at the behest of then owner Milan Mandaric. Within 18 months he was being linked with a move to Chelsea "to help" Andrii Shevchenko at the behest of "close friend" Roman Abramovich.

But that friendship will not protect him from comparisons with Mourinho: two Premier League titles, three cups and 60 home league matches unbeaten. That underlined the Portuguese's right to describe himself as "special".

The trouble was, he was too special for Abramovich and resented the pincer movement begun by the Russian's purchase of Shevchenko (another friend!), his installation of Grant over his shoulder as director of football, his refusal to buy the centre-back Mourinho wanted last January, and his insistence on a more expansively attractive style of football.

Here was the kernel of Mourinho's "failure". His teams are built to win, not entertain; just as Abramovich's money buys titles (in the best possible way, of course) but not love.

This is the challenge for Grant if he wishes, as he must, to hold at bay the candidatures of such figures as Guus Hiddink, Jurgen Klinsmann and Didier Deschamps.

Mandaric, now chairman and owner of Leicester, talked positively of Grant, saying: "I don't think there are too many people who can step into Jose's shoes but if the people at Chelsea chose Avram then it's because he deserves a chance to show what he can do. He's a good man, deals properly with people and knows football."

A club statement said: "The club is delighted that in Avram we have an experienced man who can come in at a difficult time."

The sub-text behind Mourinho's departure – with compensation possibly up to £25million – is that Abramovich wants a yes-man. But it is open to doubt whether such a person would be an improvement on an independent-minded football man.

Keir Radnedge

He's behind you...Grant looms over Mourinho

Guy Roux
The veteran coach quit Lens after 61 days

Short stay...Roux

FRANCE

GUY ROUX has friends in high places. This was clear when the 68-year-old surprised French football this summer by coming out of retirement following 44 years with Auxerre to take the reins at Lens.

Nobody doubted his capacities as a coach. But the problem was that the French Professional Football Charter stated that the coaching age limit was 65. Roux had been a supporter of the charter – until Lens offered him a two-year contract worth £70,000 a month.

Having decided that it wasn't such a bad thing to be allowed to take a top job at his advanced age, Roux was quick to enlist the help of major political figures, including minister of sport Roselyne Bachelot, to bolster his case. Even state president Nicolas Sarkozy weighed in, saying: "The rule is old, not Guy Roux."

Then it all began to unravel. Lens lost their first league game, 1-0 at Bordeaux, and then managed only 0-0 draws at home to Paris Saint-Germain and Valenciennes. Then came a trip to promoted Strasbourg, but Roux had something up his sleeve – announcing that he was quitting at the end of the game (another defeat) after just 61 days at the helm. "The team hasn't been playing badly," Roux claimed, "but it hasn't had the belief to be able to turn draws into wins, and I haven't been able to find the energy to give them that extra something."

His replacement is former international striker Jean-Pierre Papin.

Howard Johnson

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

OBITUARY

Ian Porterfield 1946-2007

IAN PORTERFIELD, who has died from colon cancer at the age of 61, was the last man to replace Alex Ferguson as a manager. He took over at Aberdeen when Ferguson moved to Manchester United in 1986.

But Porterfield will be best remembered for his goal for second division Sunderland in the 1973 FA Cup Final that defeated top division Leeds.

That was the highlight of a playing career that began at Raith Rovers in his native Scotland and ended at Sheffield Wednesday.

As a manager, Porterfield led Rotherham, Sheffield United, Aberdeen and Reading, then, in 1991, joined Chelsea, where he inevitably tangled with chairman Ken Bates.

After that Porterfield became one of the world's most-travelled coaches, leading no fewer than five national teams. The first was Zambia in 1993, taking over in the aftermath of the air crash that killed 18 squad members. There followed stints with Zimbabwe, Oman, Trinidad & Tobago and, most recently and up until his death, Armenia. Porterfield also had three years in charge of South Korean club Busan I'Park.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

News of the politicians and power-brokers

Expansion plans...Aulas

● **JEAN-MICHEL AULAS**, not content with empire-building at Lyon, of which he is owner, also has expansionist plans for G-14.

Aulas succeeded David Dein as president in May after the latter left the Arsenal board and is determined to regain ground lost over the past four years.

First, UEFA created its club forum, then Roman Abramovich put as much money into the European transfer market as the G-14's 18 members combined.

Aulas wants G-14 to increase its membership to support its opposition to the Platini plan for the Champions League.

Intriguingly for Aulas, Platini is no great fan of UEFA's own club forum. He does not believe it is the European federation's role to run a "club for clubs". Ironically, that may strengthen Aulas' hand.

● **ANGEL MARIA VILLAR**, the Spanish federation president, has been increasingly under siege in the past 18 months about the financial and administrative state of his organisation. But he is resisting demands from sports minister Jaime Lissavetzky that he call early presidential elections on the grounds that any such demand should come from within the federation.

Over the years, Barcelona and Real Madrid have both vacillated in their attitude towards Villar, but both are on his side in this fight because neither wants any more government interference in "their" sport than is strictly necessary.

● The phoney war at Arsenal goes on, and Uzbekistan-born businessman **ALISHER USMANOV** is clearly playing the long game. He has increased his stakeholding to 21 per cent, of which 14.58 per cent were bought from former club vice-chairman David Dein.

Arsenal's directors, including largest shareholder Danny Fiszman, have agreed not to consider selling their stakes until April next year, while American Stan Kroenke is apparently happy to sit tight on his 12.2 per cent.

That means that, while the Arsenal board will probably talk to Usmanov, he will not be able to acquire enough shares to force further movement. Fiszman owns 24.11 per cent and Lady Nina Bracewell-Smith just under 16 per cent.

Usmanov was brought up in Uzbekistan but has made his vast fortune in Russia. He is that

Increased stakeholding...Usmanov

country's 18th richest man, worth an estimated £3billion, thanks largely to his investments in metals, mining and the media. Usmanov is general director of Gazprominvestholding, the subsidiary that manages the debts of the state-controlled gas monopoly Gazprom.

The 53-year-old is viewed favourably by state president Vladimir Putin. But who knows what may happen when Putin steps down next March?

Keir Radnedge

GOOD MONTH FOR...

Ronaldinho...
the Brazilian returned to the national team line-up for the friendlies against the United States and Mexico, having opted out of the Copa America. Coach Dunga handed him the No 10 shirt and a pivotal role, orchestrating the play from the centre.

Orchestrator...Ronaldinho

Chris Katongo...
the Zambia captain was made a corporal in the country's army in honour of his hat-trick in the 3-1 defeat of South Africa that secured qualification for next year's Nations Cup finals.

Above expectations...Nancy

Nancy...
surprised the pundits by leading the French League after a six-game unbeaten run. The north-eastern club finished only 13th last season.

Arsene Wenger...
the Arsenal manager finally signed a new, three-year contract, worth £4million a year.

Emile Heskey...
after three years in the international wilderness, the Wigan striker was recalled to the England squad and gave two impressive performances against Israel and Russia.

Gerard Houllier...
the former Lyon and Liverpool manager was reappointed technical director of the French federation, almost 20 years after his previous spell in the post.

Reappointment...Houllier

BAD MONTH FOR...

Omitted...Adriano

Adriano...
the Brazilian striker was left out of Internazionale's 25-man Champions League squad.

Bojan Krkic...
the Barcelona teenager starred for Spain in the early rounds of the Under-17 World Cup but missed the Final against Nigeria after being sent off in the semi-final for an innocuous-looking offence that earned him a second yellow card.

Sent off...Bojan

Marcao...
the Internacional defender was banned for four months after testing positive for finasteride in July. Finasteride is used in hair-loss treatments but can also be used to mask the presence of testosterone.

Kerlon...
the Cruzeiro teenager, nicknamed The Seal, was hacked down by Atletico Mineiro defender Coelho after performing his trademark trick – flicking the ball on to his head and running along with it balanced on his forehead. The foul sparked a mass brawl.

Stephen Ireland...
the Republic of Ireland midfielder was forced to apologise for lying to the FA in order to get out of playing in the Euro 2008 tie against the Czech Republic in Prague. His girlfriend suffered a miscarriage when the Irish squad were in Slovakia for the preceding qualifier and wanted Ireland to return home as quickly as possible. For this reason, she told officials that his maternal grandmother had died. The player

Coming clean...Ireland

maintained the lie, but when it became apparent that the grandmother was still alive, he said that, in fact, it had been his paternal grandmother who had died. When this was also found to be untrue, Ireland came clean.

Emile Heskey...
four days after starring for England against Russia, he broke a metatarsal bone playing for Wigan, ruling him out of the final Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Broken bone...Heskey

Matuzalem
Brazilian in disputed move to Zaragoza from Shakhtar

UKRAINE

SHAKHTAR DONETSK are demanding £17million in compensation from Zaragoza because they claim Brazilian midfielder Matuzalem, who joined the Spanish club this summer, is still under contract with them. The Ukrainians say there was no agreement between the two clubs and claim Zaragoza encouraged the player to walk out on Shakhtar and go to them after having an official bid of £8m turned down.

Reportedly, Matuzalem had left a Shakhtar training camp without warning in July saying he was going to Brazil for family reasons. But within days Zaragoza presented him as a new signing. Shakhtar have lodged a complaint with FIFA.

Late summer transfers included the surprise move of versatile French international Lassana Diarra from Chelsea to Arsenal for an undisclosed fee. Elsewhere in England, Portsmouth bought Glen Johnson, the first signing of the Roman Abramovich era at Chelsea, and Pape Bouba Diop from Fulham. Newcastle signed Senegalese pair Abdoulaye Faye and Habib Beye from Bolton and Marseille respectively, while selling Nolberto Solano to West Ham.

Scottish league runners-up Rangers took Amdy Faye on a season-long loan from Charlton.

In Spain, Thiago Motta moved from Barcelona to Atletico Madrid after Atletico agreed a deal with Zaragoza for French midfielder Peter Luccin. Arouna Kone moved to Sevilla from PSV Eindhoven for a club record £8.3m.

In Italy, loan deals were the order of the day, with Alvaro Recoba joining Torino from Internazionale and Bernardo Corradi joining Parma from Manchester City, both for 12 months. Shabani Nonda, who spent last season on loan at Blackburn from Roma, moved to Galatasaray.

Brazilian Grafite's move to Wolfsburg for £5.5m from Le Mans was the biggest deadline-day deal in the Bundesliga. ●

Shirt tale...Matuzalem is unveiled at Zaragoza

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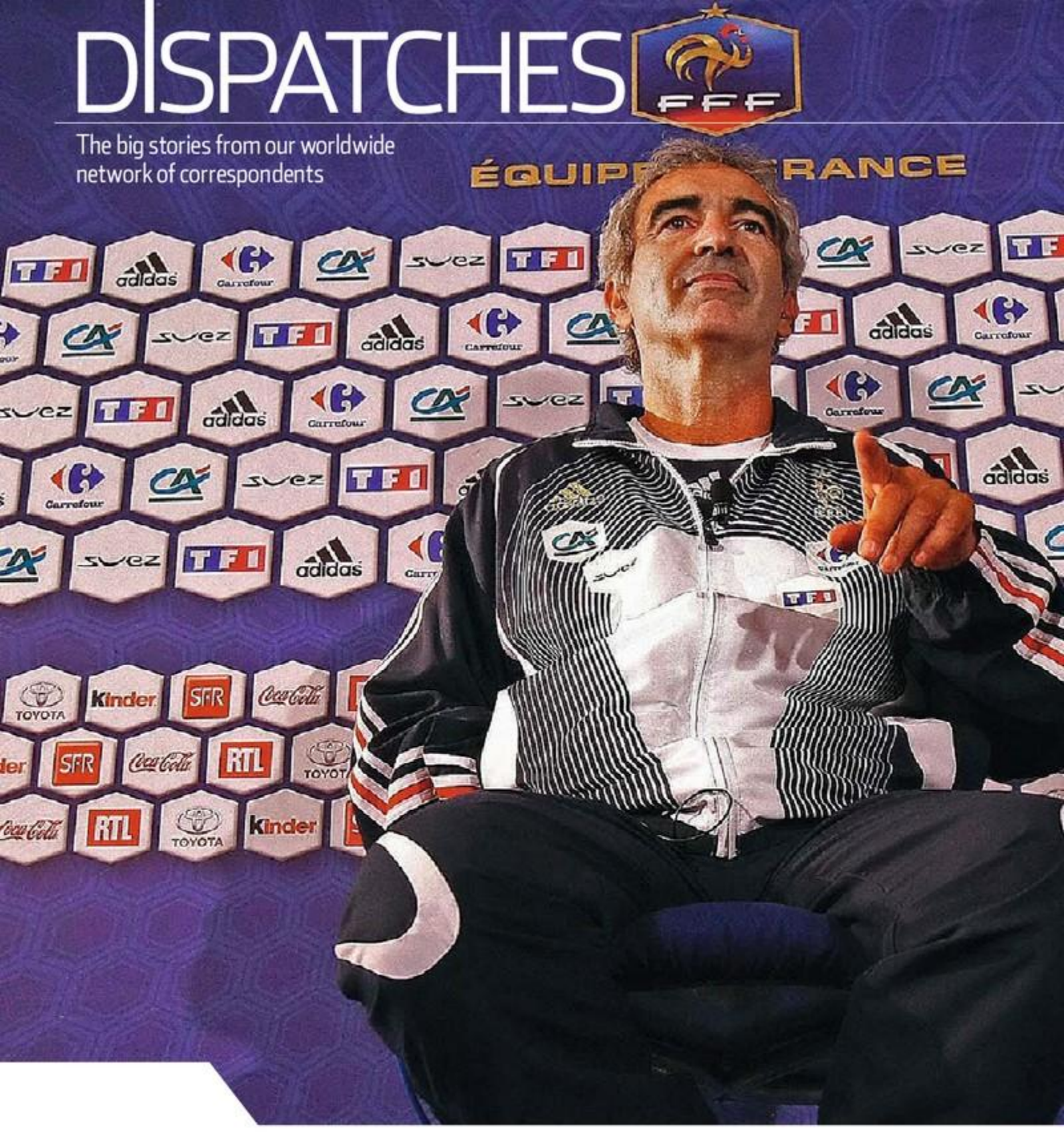

Sang-froid rules

Don't panic...Domenech played down his side's loss at Parc des Princes

The French press gave Raymond Domenech a relatively easy ride after the home Euro 2008 defeat by Scotland, while the coach was in bullish mood

HOWARD JOHNSON
in Paris

FRANCE'S FOOTBALLING elite and the national team's rather pompous coach, Raymond Domenech, should be glad there is no tabloid press in their country. Even after a second 1-0 defeat by Scotland in their Euro 2008 qualifying group, which left France in danger of missing the finals, the media retained its usual sang-froid.

"A serious blow," was the harshest assessment daily sports paper *L'Equipe* could muster as its headline. "Things get more complicated for France in their European campaign," *Le Monde* said matter-of-factly. *La Depeche*, the biggest paper in the south, went for: "Is it checkmate after the Parc des Princes?"

It is not the kind of thunderous indignation that would have screamed out from the red tops in England after such a dispiriting home defeat. But maybe it is this lack of venom that makes Domenech come across as so annoyingly sure of himself. In his post-match press conference his responses were typical of a man who, according to many French football supporters, lacks humility.

"What do you most regret about tonight's game and the previous one against Italy [a 0-0 draw in Milan]?" he was asked.

"Not having scored," he replied.

"Are you worried?"

"Worrying won't change anything."

"The game in Ukraine in November will now be decisive, won't it?"

"No. There's a decisive match against the Faroe Islands, then a decisive match against Lithuania. And after that there'll be a decisive match against Ukraine."

But however unpalatable Domenech's high-handed approach may be, some of his bullishness in the wake of the defeat inflicted by James McFadden's astonishing strike is actually based in reason. France are only third in Group B, from which the top two qualify for the finals, but they are only two points behind Scotland and one behind Italy. With the Scots yet to face the Italians at home, on November 17, the French still have their destiny in their own hands. Three wins out of three and they are home and dry.

Also, France's performance at Parc des Princes was no horror show. "In football jargon it was what they call a hold-up," *Le Monde* said. "An intricate display of controlled play from one side who dominated to the point of boredom, but where the other left with three points."

> **"In football jargon it was what they call a hold-up ...one side dominated to the point of boredom, but the other left with three points"**
>
> *Le Monde's verdict on the match*

"It's a catastrophe for us"

But there was a less measured reaction from veteran France defender Lilian Thuram, who said: "It's a catastrophe for us. It really complicates things and it's a very bad result."

And there was plenty of criticism about certain individual performances. The fiercest was reserved for captain Patrick Vieira, who had said beforehand that he was "absolutely convinced we have the quality and capability to get a win against Scotland".

According to *L'Equipe*, Vieira "was missing in action against the Scots...He seemed to have no rhythm, was second best in his one-on-one duels, wayward with his passing and incapable of being able to drive forward with the purpose we have seen in the past." *France Football* magazine gave Vieira three out of 10, the worst mark for any French player, and said that he had had "a catastrophic match".

But the magazine also gave fairly scathing assessments of virtually all the other players. Golden boy Franck Ribery got a simple "ineffective", Florent Malouda was dismissed with "not seen enough", and Lassana Diarra was judged to have "wasted too much".

Only veteran Chelsea midfielder Claude Makelele escaped criticism. One or two mistakes in his distribution were forgiven "since he was having to play the role of two men in the middle of the park", another none-too-subtle dig at Vieira.

France were without Thierry Henry because of suspension, and he should be available for the remaining Euro 2008 ties. But any slip-up against the Faroes, Lithuania or Ukraine will prompt the French media to ask questions of Domenech. They may not be posed with British tabloid brutality, but there is no doubt sustained criticism can be equally pernicious, no matter how gently it is worded. ●

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

Benched...disconsolate Beckham finally accepts he needs time out after injuring a knee in the SuperLiga Final against Pachuca

Beckham to blame

The Englishman's introduction to MLS has been mishandled, and then came the injuries. But he himself is largely responsible

PAUL GARDNER in New York

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER, like every other American sport, is big on handing out awards to its players. A whole bunch of sponsored trophies are presented at the season's end: best this, top that, most valuable the other, and so on. And the list has just got bigger.

At the end of this season, there will be a newcomer of the year award. Why the sudden interest, given that MLS has had "newcomers" every year since its beginnings in 1996?

Well, one of this year's newcomers is David Beckham. As he is unlikely to win any playing awards (one for injuries, maybe: Most Tedious Swollen Ankle?), this looked a sure-fire way to make sure he is honoured at the awards in November.

But no. In announcing the award, MLS said it would be for "a player's on-field impact on his team's success". There followed a list of possible candidates...but no Beckham.

Never mind, the list is impressive enough. This has been a good year for MLS signings, most of them attack-minded Latin Americans who have had an immediate impact in brightening up the League's football. DC United's Brazilian striker, Luciano Emilio, was topping the scorers' chart with 18 goals. Right behind him, on 14, was New York Red Bulls' Colombian forward Juan Pablo Angel. The superb displays of Mexican forward Cuauhtemoc Blanco have ignited a late-season rally by Chicago Fire, while Colombian midfielder Juan Toja has had an outstanding campaign with FC Dallas.

The new award makes sense because none of the new arrivals is eligible for the rookie of the year award, which goes only to players without previous pro experience.

But, award or no award, the overwhelming importance of Beckham cannot be denied. He has played only 310 not-particularly-sparkling minutes but this has become a major story in itself. That his introduction to MLS has been mishandled is glaringly obvious. But a great deal of the responsibility for that evidently lies with the man himself. In particular, the absurdity of his playing for England in the August friendly against Germany at Wembley and turning out for Los Angeles Galaxy in California the following day.

This surreal sequence was preceded by Steve McClaren's wasteful visit to Los Angeles, during which he dodged what ought to have been the key business for him and Galaxy general manager Alexi Lalas – an agreement that the England boss would not select Beckham against Germany.

Galaxy, a team in deep trouble, obviously needed Beckham much more than England. In any case the player, with a nagging ankle injury, was not fit. But it didn't happen, simply because Beckham made it clear he wanted to play. And what Beckham wants, Beckham gets. Galaxy coach Frank Yallop, at a press conference in New York, smiled benignly as he explained that Beckham "really wanted to play" against Germany. "But do you want him to play?" Yallop was asked. "He wants to play," replied the no-longer-smiling coach.

Of course Yallop didn't want Beckham to go. But he went, and the whole silly, boy-hero episode was a disaster. After his very average performance at Wembley came the long flight – it's worth remembering that it was Beckham who had told us earlier that flying caused his ankle to swell – and, incredibly, a full 90 minutes against Chivas USA. Galaxy lost 3-0 and Beckham was visibly hobbling at the end.

What on earth was Yallop thinking? Evidently something rather different from what he did. "It wasn't the intention to play him at all," he later said, "but he came in and said that he felt OK. I used him tonight and I shouldn't have done."

But the decision was clearly made by Beckham, and again no one dared to contradict him. This kow-towing does not bode well for either Yallop or Lalas. No wonder the rumours abound that Jurgen Klinsmann, who lives only 20 minutes away down the freeway, will replace Yallop and make sure Beckham does not become bigger than the club.

Feeling the strain

Of course, Yallop and Lalas are feeling the strain. The former, a decent, low-key man, has admitted: "It's not been easy – it's been kind of testing." The much more outgoing Lalas has lashed out at MLS, complaining: "We're sure as hell not going to put up with another season like this. This is a ridiculous schedule that we have been saddled with."

He was talking about the way the League rearranged the fixture list to make sure that most of Galaxy's away games would be played after Beckham's arrival, thus ensuring maximum national exposure for the superstar.

But that was always likely to be part of a deal that also has huge advantages for Galaxy, including a massive leap in season ticket sales. Lalas is unlikely to find many sympathisers.

A further fiasco awaited. Playing in the defeat against Pachuca in the Final of the SuperLiga, a tournament for big US and Mexican clubs, Beckham went in for a 50-50 ball and came out with a knee ligament sprain that will sideline him for at least six weeks. At least this seemed to shake him out of the belief that he is a superman. "Maybe it's time for me to say I need the rest, and don't come back until it's right," he said.

By the time he is fit, it is quite likely that Galaxy's season will be over since they could well miss out on the play-offs. But would they be doing any better were Beckham playing? A sacrilegious question, I suppose, and a notion dismissed by team-mate Chris Klein, who said: "We're markedly better when he's on the field...when he's not it hurts us."

Well, he would say that, but Galaxy lost four of the five games in which Beckham has played. Then, with him nursing his knee injury and their other star, Landon Donovan, on national team duty, Galaxy played one of their best games of the season when beating Colorado Rapids 3-1 – only their fourth win in 20 matches. ●

> **"Galaxy, a team in deep trouble, needed Beckham more than England. But he made it clear he wanted to play against Germany. And what Beckham wants, Beckham gets"**

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

Feeling the pain...Ballack goes down at Newcastle with the ankle injury that was to prove the start of his problems with Chelsea

Taking the Michael

Chelsea have been accused of underhand tactics in their treatment of their highest-paid player

RAPHAEL HONIGSTEIN in London

MICHAEL BALLACK won three domestic doubles with Bayern Munich in four years, but when he left for pastures new and blue in 2006, some very harsh words were spoken. The then German champions, stung by Ballack's refusal to sign a new deal, suddenly talked down his achievements; vice-president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge even claimed the national team captain had been little more than a decent midfielder who happened to be very good in the air.

Ballack was more diplomatic about his former club but let it be known that he felt the Bavarians' failure in the Champions League was not simply a consequence of bad luck or financial constraints. One of their main problems, he suggested, was being too soft on their players. Despite his fiery public persona, general manager Uli Hoeness, in particular, would always happily extend the contracts of underperforming players instead of wielding the axe.

At Chelsea, on the other hand, Ballack immediately experienced the sort of ruthlessness missing in the Bundesliga. Chelsea unceremoniously dumped French defender William Gallas after contractual wrangles, and the German inherited his No 13 shirt. Ballack couldn't help but be impressed: this was a club who obviously wanted to succeed at all costs.

Just over a year later, Ballack is beginning to wonder whether moving to Stamford Bridge's cut-throat environment was such a smart idea after all. To be sure, he is the highest-paid player in the Premier League, on £141,000 a week if you include his signing-on fee. But the 31-year-old has not kicked a ball since picking up an ankle injury in April and finds himself increasingly marginalised.

Chelsea have not named him in their squad for the Champions League, and a host of former German greats, including Franz Beckenbauer, recommend a move when the transfer window opens again in January. "Chelsea have made it clear to Ballack that he's no longer welcome," opined Stefan Effenberg, Bayern's former captain.

How did it come to this? The disenchantment with a player the now departed manager Jose Mourinho labelled one of his "untouchables" began after Ballack hobbled off after 18 minutes of a league game at Newcastle on April 22 following a challenge by Titus Bramble. Chelsea's medical staff were confident he would soon be back, but he did not appear three days later when Chelsea took on Liverpool in the Champions League semi-final first leg. He could hardly run in training.

A trip to German FA doctor Hans Muller-Wohlfahrt revealed Chelsea's doctors had missed a piece of chipped bone in his ankle. Ballack decided to have immediate surgery in order to retain a chance of being back for the FA Cup Final and a possible Champions League Final.

When Mourinho found out about Ballack's surgery, he hit the roof. Chelsea's medical staff claimed Ballack had undergone the procedure without permission, and a media campaign started: club officials and players were briefed against the midfielder and his supposed lack of loyalty.

Ballack, however, presented the incontrovertable medical evidence. "I couldn't stand on my left foot without pain," he said. "I would never have undergone surgery if it hadn't been absolutely necessary." Chelsea apologised to him and put the record straight on their website, yet the damage seems to be done. A few months later, Mourinho said "Ballack's life won't be easy" and hinted he had fallen down the pecking order.

The situation escalated. Chelsea left Ballack out of their 25-man squad list for the Champions League group stage. They said his injury was the sole reason and denied he was being pushed out.

Motivational message?

But it is inconceivable that any top club in Europe would leave out their best-paid player if there was even the faintest possibility he could take part in the competition. Ballack has, by all accounts, a very decent chance of being back in full training by November at the very latest. If, on the other hand, his omission was a motivational message from Mourinho it was also a very strange one. Assuming Ballack does come back and play well in the Premier League, he would not be eligible for Europe until the new year and the Champions League knockout stages, assuming Chelsea get there.

The German FA is naturally worried its national team captain is being sidelined at club level. National coach Joachim Low has promised to call Chelsea to find out more. Initially, the Germans were unwilling to get involved but then found themselves cold-shouldered by the club, too. For 10 days they tried in vain to get official permission for Ballack's appearance in the new Adidas TV commercial being shot in Cologne, but nobody at Chelsea returned their calls. Germany's general manager, Oliver Bierhoff, called the club's behaviour "out of order".

Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich was reportedly not best pleased that one of his star players will not feature in Europe this year. It is unclear whether new manager Avram Grant will treat Ballack any differently.

Ballack has not been under such intense pressure since he was a youngster trying to establish himself at Kaiserslautern under Otto Rehhagel. He will return to a dressing room where he has few allies among team-mates who are still reeling from the shock departure of Mourinho, the man who signed most of them. Chelsea will be the veritable shark tank Ballack admired from afar but he will be a much smaller fish than before. There will be little sympathy for him. But this tale shows even superstar footballers must be careful what they wish for. ●

> "Chelsea left Ballack out of their Champions League squad but denied he was being pushed out"

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

Klose encounter...the Bayern striker goes flying after being viciously fouled by Werder Bremen defender Naldo, who was only booked

Rough and tumble

Leaders Bayern Munich have complained that Bundesliga referees are punishing opponents too lightly for fouling their stars

BAYERN MUNICH'S delight at the outstanding early-season form of new attacking trident Franck Ribery, Luca Toni and Miroslav Klose has been tempered by what they regard as the over-the-top challenges meted out to the trio by opponents.

The Bavarians believe referees are not doing enough to protect their stars, and with some justification. During Bayern's highly impressive 4-0 win at title rivals Werder Bremen, the home team's Brazilian central defender, Naldo, received only a yellow card for almost decapitating Klose with a wild swing of a boot. A week later Hannover looked to have made a conscious decision to stop Ribery at all costs, repeatedly fouling the French wizard from behind. Hannover's Albanian midfielder, Altin Lala, was sent off for two bookings, but his fate could easily have been shared by other miscreants in his side.

For Bayern general manager Uli Hoeness, who angrily confronted Hannover coach Dieter Hecking during the match, the time had come for a clampdown on the spoilers. "If it goes on like this it will be goodnight football," Hoeness roared. "Teams who can't compete in terms of skill are turning to excessively hard play. They constantly went through the back of Ribery. The safety of players is being put at risk. It's crazy. Every challenge was a foul. They should play the ball not bone. Referees have to lay down the law, even if it means teams being reduced to seven or eight men."

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld agreed, saying: "We have to come down harder on brutal fouls committed by players who have no chance of reaching the ball, not just when we are on the receiving end. It should apply to the whole league."

Hecking vehemently denied his team had gone out with malice aforethought, then went on the offensive, claiming that the Bayern bench had put pressure on referee Thorsten Kinhofer to dismiss Lala. "I realise Uli Hoeness wants to support his guys but what I don't understand is when four men from the Bayern bench jump up to demand cards," Hecking said. "We have a referee for that...if we had behaved this way, we'd have been sent to the stand."

Bayern's problem is that while Ribery and co are marked men, the club are far from everyone's idea of a victim. They have long enjoyed the benefit of the doubt from referees. Among the current side, Dutch midfielder Mark Van Bommel is an expert in the dark arts of dirty play and provocation, while keeper Oliver Kahn has a long track record of getting his retaliation in first and mysteriously escaping justice.

The other sticking point of the Bayern argument is the implication that superstars somehow deserve special treatment. A foul is a foul whoever the recipient.

Those of a cynical disposition believe the Hoeness anti-rough-house line is merely a ruse to encourage officialdom to bend in his team's favour in the future. But if this was the intention, it is unlikely to have the desired effect. Referees regularly accused of being too petty could quite easily come to resent the new get-tough advice from Bayern.

So, is today's Bundesliga more violent than it used to be? Not according to a survey of top-flight captains by *Kicker* magazine. The overwhelming majority viewed Bayern's complaints as a storm in a teacup and generally felt wrongdoing was part of the game. "Fans also come to games to see fouls," said Arminia Bielefeld's Mathias Hain.

NICK BIDWELL in Munich

Racist abuse accusation

Borussia Dortmund keeper Roman Weidenfeller recently found himself in the dock, accused of racially abusing Schalke's Nigeria-born attacker Gerald Asamoah during the Ruhr derby. Early in the second half, a collision between the pair led to heated words. Asamoah later claimed that Weidenfeller called him a "black pig", a charge the keeper vehemently denied. Just to make the affair even more interesting, the accuser and the suspect used to be friends.

The result of the subsequent federation disciplinary tribunal was messy. While cleared of racist utterings, Weidenfeller was found guilty of dubbing Asamoah a "gay pig" – in German the words "gay" and "black" are quite similar – and handed a three-game ban and £7,000 fine. "We accepted the punishment on the basis that Weidenfeller used words he shouldn't have," declared Dortmund sports director Michael Zorc. "What's important for us is that the racist element of the charge did not stand."

Much more appealing is the story of 1899 Hoffenheim, newly promoted to the second division. The south-western club, whose base is a village of just 3,000 inhabitants, demonstrated their ambition by splashing out £5.7million on Gremio and Brazil Under-20 striker Carlos Eduardo, also a target for Porto, Benfica, Milan and Internazionale.

Never before has a team at this level spent so much on one player. To put the deal into perspective, Bayern paid only £2m more to lure Italy striker Toni from Fiorentina.

Hoffenheim owner Dietmar Hopp, who made his fortune in software, hopes to have his club in the Bundesliga by 2010, when their new 30,000-capacity stadium should be completed. To this end, he has engaged highly-experienced ex-Stuttgart and Schalke coach Ralf Rangnick. Besides Carlos Eduardo, Hopp, the man known as the German Bill Gates, also paid £4.2m for young Nigerian attacker Edu from Lyn of Oslo.

Inevitably, such spending power has aroused jealousy, with Hoffenheim cast as nouveau riche upstarts. But Rangnick says: "As well as bringing in talent such as Carlos Eduardo and Edu, we aim to give a regional identity to the side, to give local kids every chance to come through our academy system and make the grade in a really competitive team. We're not about investing millions in 30-year-olds." ●

"What I don't understand is when four men from the Bayern bench jump up to demand cards. We have a referee for that"

Hannover coach Dieter Hecking goes on the counter-offensive after Bayern's charges of rough play

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Day in the sun...Miitamariki Joseph of the Cook Islands in action in the World Cup preliminaries, but his nation was one of the early fallers

Island dreams

The qualifying process for the 2010 World Cup finals has already started, with the South Pacific Games acting as the first stage of preliminaries for the Oceania region

THE MAIN DRAW for the 2010 World Cup qualifiers will be held in Durban on November 25, but some countries have already fallen by the wayside in the quest for places at the South Africa finals.

The Oceania region got the qualifying ball rolling in late August, when it used the South Pacific Games tournament in Apia, Samoa as the first stage of its preliminaries.

Ten countries competed, though one of them, Tuvalu, is not a member of FIFA and could not have qualified for the finals. Tuvalu is a cluster of atolls totalling 10 square miles, with a population of just 12,000 and said to be under the threat of submergence because of global warming. So it was not surprising that the team were completely sunk, 16-0, in their first match, against Fiji.

But the tournament as a whole did not go with the form book. The Solomon Islands, who reached Oceania's decider, against Australia, in the 2006 World Cup qualifiers, began as favourites but missed out on a medal and progress to the next phase of the preliminaries.

Instead, it was New Caledonia who won gold, beating Fiji, the defending champions, 1-0 in the Final with a goal from midfielder Jose Hmae. Vanuatu, who had stunned New Zealand in the 2006 World Cup qualifiers, grabbed bronze by beating the Solomon Islands 2-0.

The top three will now meet the Kiwis, Oceania's top seeds, in a round-robin group over the next 12 months to decide the region's winners. That country will then play-off with the fifth-best Asian team for a place in South Africa.

The Apia tournament was played out on two adjoining fields, surrounded by tall coconut trees and separated by a small grandstand with a capacity of no more than 200.

It was only half full when the 2010 World Cup campaign officially kicked off, Axel Williams of Tahiti having the first touch in the Francophone derby against New Caledonia. It was the first of what FIFA estimates will be between 850 and 900 qualifiers, which will run until November 2009.

It took just nine minutes for the first goal to arrive, a penalty converted by New Caledonia captain Pierre Wajoka that proved to be the winner. The island territory continued unbeaten through the group stage and then saw off the Solomon Islands 3-2 in the semi-finals.

New Caledonia, which lies off the east coast of Australia, has already produced a World Cup winner in Christian Karembeu but has been a FIFA member itself for only three years. French coach Didier Chambaron is credited with the significant improvements in the tactical organisation of the team, which already had an abundance of technique.

Fiji were also unbeaten until the Final, having won three of their group games, drawn 1-1 with New Caledonia in the other, and beaten Vanuatu 3-0 in the semis. Roy Krishna had been tipped as the Fijians' player to watch but by the end the 19-year-old was being used only as a substitute. Instead, their star was Osea Vakatalesau, who scored 10 goals in six matches.

Fiji's Uruguayan coach, Juan Carlos Buzzetti, is a veteran of the Oceania scene, having played in Australia (now, of course, in the Asia confederation) and then coached in Vanuatu with some success. He has been at the Fiji helm since the start of the year and has had some impressive resources put at his disposal, including the funding to allow him to take the side on tours of the United States and Australia in preparation for Samoa.

If that support continues, Fiji are likely to be New Zealand's only real threat in the Oceania group, despite their defeat by New Caledonia. "We will have to work around the [domestic] league and see what we can put together, but I'll be sticking with the same team," Buzzetti said.

MARK GLEESON in Apia

Village club atmosphere

There were none of the luxurious surrounds of international football on offer in Samoa. Teams were housed in college or high-school residences, sleeping on bunk beds and having to queue for food in communal kitchens. Indeed, there was a village club atmosphere about many of the earlier games, and some hopeless mismatches. American Samoa, who suffered a record World Cup defeat, 31-0, by Australia in 2001, conceded a further 38 goals in their four games in Samoa, including a 15-0 thrashing by Vanuatu. But their inferiority is hardly surprising. The country has no senior league and the first-choice goalkeeper was a 17-year-old who had never played a senior game before.

Coach David Brand can select his squad from fewer than 100 players. Yet the former Stockport and Wigan player kept his charges motivated throughout and celebrated like a World Cup winner when Ramon Ott scored their only goal, a penalty against the Solomon Islands in a 12-1 defeat. "For us to concede less than 10 goals is a World Cup win, to score a goal even more brilliant," Brand said.

As well as the Solomon Islands and American Samoa, the other early fallers on the long road to 2010 were the Cook Islands, Tahiti, Tonga and Samoa.

The hosts were captained by Chris Cahill, younger brother of Everton's Tim, who was playing at the other end of the World Cup spectrum for Australia at the last World Cup finals.

The pair were both born in Australia but their mother is from Samoa and Tim Cahill played for the island nation at under-17 level while on a visit to his grandmother. The decision looked to have cost him an international career with the Socceroos until FIFA changed its eligibility rules in 2003, allowing him to make the switch.

Chris Cahill was released by Sydney FC of Australia's A-League last season and hopes to find a club in Europe. He now has a little World Cup experience to add to his CV. ●

> **"For us to concede less than 10 goals is a World Cup win, to score a goal even more brilliant"**
>
> *American Samoa coach David Brand cheerfully accepts his side's limitations*

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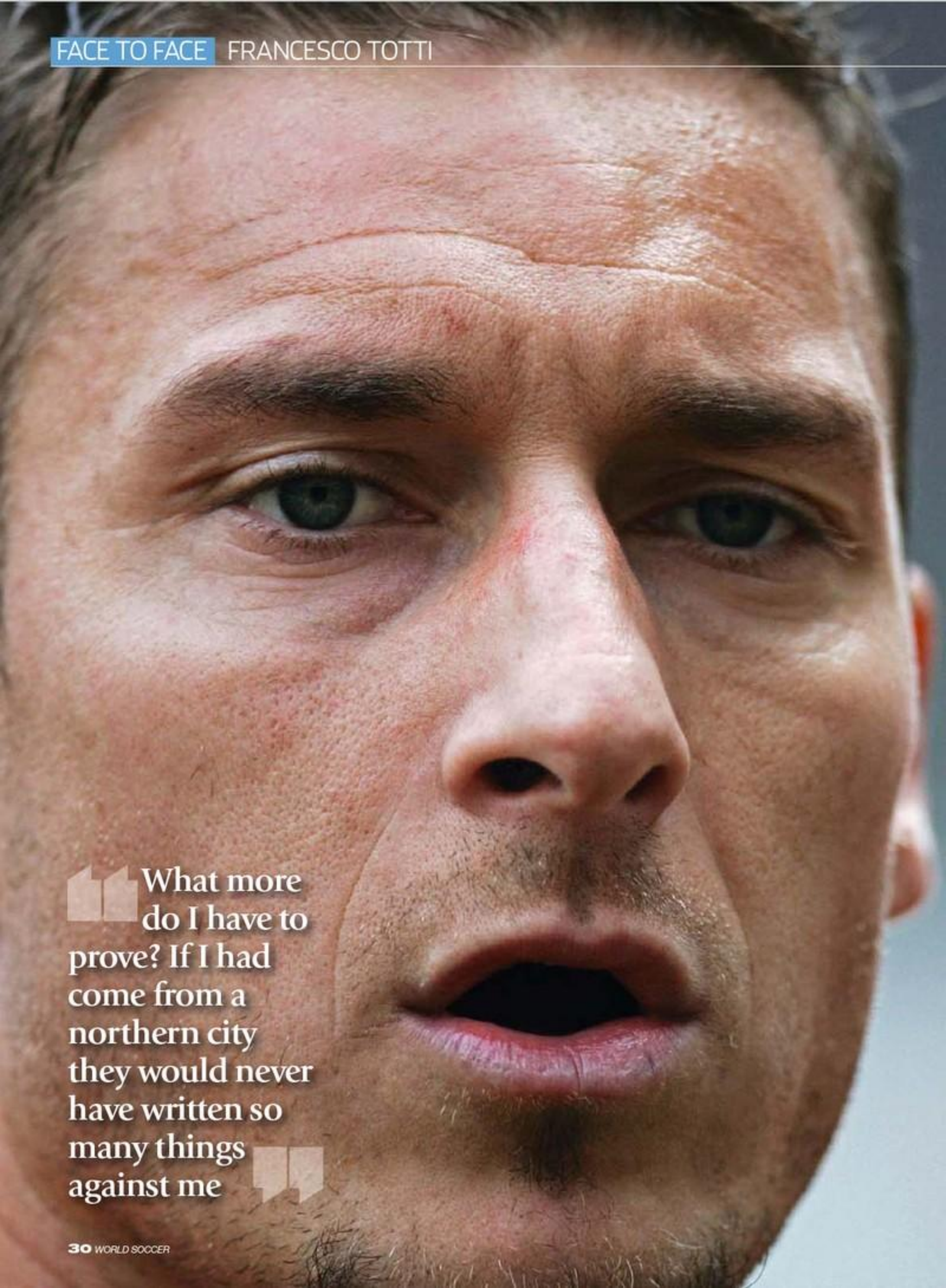

"What more do I have to prove? If I had come from a northern city they would never have written so many things against me"

Roman emperor

The kingpin of the Italian capital is also a World Cup winner and holder of the ESM Golden Shoe. But he cited "northern" media bias against him as a reason for quitting the national team. Paddy Agnew reports

FOR MORE than a year, it had been hanging in the air – the suspicion that Italy's most famous footballer, Francesco Totti, would no longer play for Italy. He was 30, had suffered plenty of injuries and, above all, had now won a World Cup. So it was hardly a surprise when he announced his international retirement in July.

Perhaps it would have been more elegant to have stepped down immediately after Italy's triumph in Berlin, rather than wait for 12 months, during which he opted not to play for the *Azzurri*. Perhaps, too, it would have been more elegant just to cite the crowded fixture calendar as his reason and leave his "northern" critics out of the equation. But Totti is Totti, just about as Roman as the Trevi fountain.

His announcement started on a very familiar note: "My back, my ankle, my knee – I spend most of my days on the physio's couch. I begin to train only on a Friday and for that reason I cannot play too many games in a season. If I want to keep on playing at a certain level, then something has to go, and I chose to let the national team go because my priority is Roma."

But then Totti touched on a raw nerve – the alleged anti-Rome or anti-Totti bias of a whole section of the "northern" media, based in and around Milan and Turin. "I've won a World Cup and a European Under-21 Championship. What more do I have to prove?" he asked. "Yet they [the northern media] continue to say that I am not a key player, that I limped my way through the finals in Germany, without taking on board all the sacrifices I made to get myself fit for the World Cup.

"It's because I am Roman, they're always against us. If I had come from a northern city, they would never have written so many things against me. Now I'm gone, you'll see that they'll get stuck into [Roma team-mates and internationals Daniele] De Rossi and [Alberto] Aquilani."

To neutrals, Totti was exaggerating. He has long been an icon for all Italians. Yet, as is the case with many great players, not everyone appreciates his peculiar talents. Totti has long been criticised in Italy, but not all of it has come from the north.

The idea that Totti had "never really done it" for Italy was widespread before Germany 2006. For many he was one of those infuriating players who turn on the greatest skills imaginable when his side are doing well but who tends to fade from the picture when the going gets tough.

But after the finals it was hard to continue with this line. Totti, brilliantly (and sparingly) used by coach Marcello Lippi, was a big factor in Italy's success story, even if it could be argued that captain Fabio Cannavaro was an even bigger one. His reading of the game, vision and cool were attributes of a great player.

No doubts

Enzo Bearzot, who led Italy to their 1982 World Cup win, has no doubts about Totti's quality. "It's simply not true he was not appreciated in other cities and by fans from outside Rome," he said. "I consider myself one of these last mentioned fans and I defended him throughout the World Cup in Germany. I also considered him one of the few complete and authentic class players in Italian football. I would dearly have loved to have him in my team."

Totti's failure to talk publicly about his international future in the year after the finals did not go down well with the Italy squad. "Enough. Either you're in or you're out," Cannavaro said at one point.

On the day of his announcement, Totti responded by saying: "It really annoyed me that...national team players talked to reporters about me, saying things that simply were not true. They should have informed themselves first."

That sounded like a very definitive slamming of the national team door, but was it? Clearly, he has plenty on his plate this season with Roma, who must be considered among the favourites for the Serie A title. They also need to atone for last season's humiliating 7-1 Champions League drubbing by Manchester United when they face the English champions in this term's group stage.

His club career could yet prove full of riches. In his mature years and with the help of a hard-running midfield, Totti has become a goalscorer. Last season his tally of 26 in the League won him the ESM Golden Shoe award. Given the way Roma have started the new Serie A season, with three wins out of three and two goals for Totti, a lot more of each look on the cards.

Yet his absence from the national team has not gone unnoticed. Italy did well in the recent Euro 2008 qualifiers, a 0-0 home draw with France and a 2-1 win in Ukraine, but something was lacking. Roberto Donadoni's side were organised, competitive and hard-working but a tad short on real invention. If ever a team cried out for an audacious playmaker such as Totti, it is this one.

Alessandro Del Piero, carrying the playmaking load, huffed and puffed but blew no houses down. Presuming Italy qualify for Euro 2008 (that is by no means a certainty), no doubt we will be hearing calls for Totti's return. The same goes for South Africa in 2010. Curiously, in the interview (printed overleaf) after receiving the Golden Shoe, Totti was ambiguous about the chances of an international comeback. "The 2010 World Cup finals would be a tremendous experience," he said. "I would say *ni* [Italian for yes and no]."

Striking gold

Top dad...Totti and son Christian admire the Golden Shoe

DID YOU ever think before last season that you would win the ESM Golden Shoe?
No, never. I am a typical No 10, more the person to set up goals than to score them. Because of Roma's system and because we were without a really prolific striker, I moved up front. But to be honest, I like scoring more than providing assists.

At what point did you think about winning the trophy last season?
I didn't even think about after the Italian season had ended because there were still some games left in Spain and Ruud Van Nistelrooy had a good chance to win it [he ended up with 25 goals for Real Madrid, one fewer than Totti].

Is it significant that you, as a No 10, won the Golden Shoe and not a typical striker?
Football has changed in recent years. To score goals as a striker is much more difficult than in the past. You have to be very strong and a complete player to score against strong defenders. The No 10 has become more important but it is not the same No 10 as in the days of Diego Maradona and Michel Platini.

Why are you scoring so many goals now, as opposed to recent seasons?
The season before last I was injured and I missed many games. Before that I played more like a midfielder, making assists.

You could have won the Golden Shoe much more easily; you missed six penalties.
It was better to miss because otherwise the end of the season would not have been as exciting and a little predictable! I'll carry on taking the penalties.

Who are your favourites for this season's Golden Shoe?
David Trezeguet of Juventus is a real candidate, and Luca Toni is dangerous, too; he can score a lot of goals for Bayern Munich. But I will give it a try, too. In terms of Serie A, I have more chance of finishing top scorer again because as well as Toni's departure, Cristiano Lucarelli has left for Shakhtar Donetsk and Rolando Bianchi went to Manchester City.

As well as the Golden Shoe, you won the Italian Cup and the Italian Super Cup. Are you in with a chance of winning the European player of the year award, and who else might be in the running?
I'm thinking of Kaka, Cristiano Ronaldo and Ruud Van Nistelrooy. But maybe I am a candidate, also. I think for all players who feel they have a chance it is important to have a good group phase in the Champions League.

What are your feelings about the Champions League?
It's the only prize I have never won, but as a Roma player it is very difficult to win it. Of course, I dream of winning the Champions League, but every year the same teams are the favourites. The [other] Italian teams, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United. Barcelona are serious contenders because they've got Ronaldinho, Henry, Messi and Eto'o.

"What I have with this club I could never find anywhere else"

Roma play Manchester United again in the group stage. Will you be looking for revenge after the 7-1 defeat in last season's quarter-finals?
Of course, I would love to win 7-0. But I had better not say these kind of things. The English tabloids print everything because they have to sell a lot of copies.

You have announced your international retirement. Why did you quit?
I turned over an important page in my career. It was a hard decision but I had to make it. It was too much for me. It has nothing to do with Roberto Donadoni as a coach. I decided to quit when Marcello Lippi was still coach.

Do you still think that, as a player from Rome, you attract criticism?
Yes. In difficult times the media used me as a scapegoat. They say I am lazy and a tourist. That hurts me a lot.

Is there any chance of a return?
The 2010 World Cup finals would be a tremendous experience...I would say *ni* [Italian for yes and no]. It is very difficult to say something about it at this moment. I'm not saying I'll never come back. Of course I want to play in the World Cup in South Africa, but a lot of things have to happen. My life at this moment, playing for my club and being with my wife and kids, makes me happy.

Do you think Roma will be among the Serie A title contenders this season? Inter coach Roberto Mancini says your team are playing very well but you finished 22 points behind his side last season as they won the championship.
That's true, but Inter had 40 quality players and we were usually using the same players. But when you see the first XI I think Roma have a stronger team. I see us as one of the four favourite teams. But we are from Rome. When it's good, it's really good, but when it's bad they kill you. Over the summer we lost Cristian Chivu, the best central defender in the world. But with Juan, Cicinho and Ludovic Giuly we have three good new players and, of course, our squad is young and ambitious.

Could you ever leave Rome?
It's my town, I grew up in the city and I've lived here all my life. Roman people are special. What I have with this club I could never find anywhere else. I worked for my place here and I am not curious about how things are at another club.

Do you go out and about in Rome?
Certainly not. It's eight years since I went out in the city, and that was by night. I have not been there in the daytime for 18 years. It is hard to be Totti. My life is at Trigoria, Roma's training centre, and at home. My life with my wife Ilary and the kids, Christian and Chanel, is private and I want to keep it that way. People have to accept that. ●

Interview by Massimo Cecchini, Vincent Okker and Chris Tempelman/ESM

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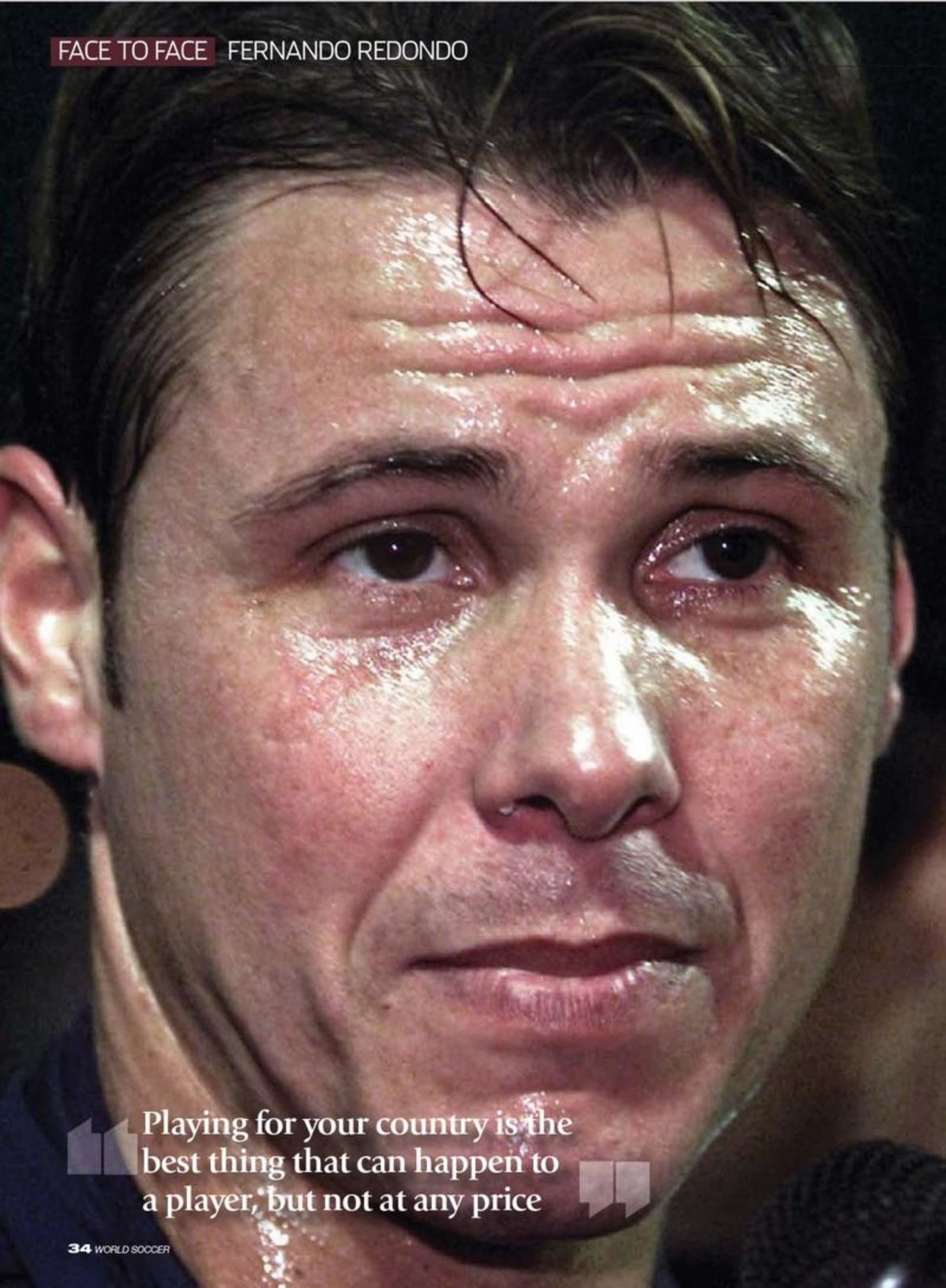

Playing for your country is the best thing that can happen to a player, but not at any price

No regrets

The former Argentina midfielder is as opinionated as ever

FERNANDO REDONDO retired in 2003 at the age of 34 after a successful club career in Europe with Real Madrid and Milan. But the midfielder, whose style many have tried to copy, won only 29 caps for Argentina after a series of disagreements with successive national coaches. He is now back in Argentina, though not involved in football in any official capacity.

Do you regret not playing more for Argentina?
I am not sorry I made my decision [not to play] but it's not true that I did not want to play. Playing for your national team is the best thing that can happen to a player, but not at any price.

You had differences with Daniel Passarella – not least about cutting your hair! – when you decided not to play for the team. But what about later under a different coach?
I don't want to enter into the business with Passarella again. Later, [Marcelo] Bielsa called me and I had to tell him I had a knee problem – an injury that dogged me during my career. I would not have wanted to play at only 50 per cent of my capacity.

Jose Pekerman [the coach at last year's World Cup] always admired your play.
I prefer not to think of what could have been. Anyway, by that time my moment had passed. I would not have enjoyed it, nor would I have been useful. When you cannot give your best on the field it is time to join the spectators.

What sort of football did you find on returning to Argentina?
There's another rhythm, not so measured, there's less football of the type I like. In many cases there is no conception of the game. But I don't want to be negative since many good players continue to appear.

Does Leo Messi remind you of Maradona?
He's an outstanding player and shows it in every match. He's a pleasure to watch. I don't know if one can compare him with Maradona, who will always be in a class of his own. But Messi is one of those players who surprises and will continue to surprise. He has natural talent.

Fernando Gago, now with Real Madrid, has been likened to you.
He has good qualities – he's a calming influence and is able to dictate a game's rhythm. I like to see all the play go through the central midfielder, but there are fewer and fewer playing the way I like it. So it's a nice surprise when players such as Gago or [Boca Juniors' Ever] Banega appear.

What of the criticism Juan Roman Riquelme had to suffer after last year's World Cup?
People always expect more from him because of his high standard, but he did not play so badly. Of course, he can play better because he has an infinite capacity, as he showed at Boca Juniors this year, but it isn't so easy in a World Cup.

If you became Argentina coach today, would you play with a linkman?
Well, Gago and [Esteban] Cambiasso would be in the team for sure – and, of course, Riquelme. When the ball passes through him, it's a different game. He can speed up the game and slow it down, and he creates goalscoring opportunities. It wasn't easy for him to adapt at Barcelona, especially with a coach such as [Louis] Van Gaal, who asks for things out of this world. At Villarreal he again played as he had done at Boca Juniors, but then had problems with the coach and it went to pieces.

South Americans say the big difference between Argentina and Brazil is that Argentina has a lot of good players and Brazil a lot of stars.
Argentina also has stars – [Juan Sebastian] Veron, Riquelme, [Carlos] Tevez, Messi and more – but Brazil beats us in quantity. We need to stimulate talent more.

Are tactics limiting technique and talent?
Right from the youngest junior divisions there is a great preoccupation to win. You don't see defenders playing it out of defence. They don't take risks to avoid losing. We go the wrong way in forming players. I remember at Argentinos Juniors it was a question of who played better, not whether the team won. The defender who just kicked the ball away would get a caning from the coach. I watch some junior teams now and the defenders just clear the ball without worrying whether their team retain possession or not. I believe in the players, not the rigid systems.

So the coaches are at fault?
You become linked with some coaches who propose the right methods, but it depends a lot on the player himself. When I joined Real Madrid we won the League in the first year with Jorge Valdano and played exquisite football. Then [Fabio] Capello came and wanted something completely different – more direct, not so much elaboration. I didn't enjoy playing that type of game nor did I betray my ideals. The team continued to play well and Capello slowly forgot his rigid tactics. If, however, he had asked me to mark an opponent and follow him all over the field, I would have said no.

What do you think of the current Argentina coach, Alfio Basile?
I admire his strong personality, his simple way of explaining things. It is said Basile does not work on tactics and does not watch videos but the main thing for a coach is to be respected and believed, and he is. I have a lot of faith in this new stage of the national team and this could be a great revenge for 1994 [Argentina lost in the World Cup second round after Maradona was sent home for drug use].

Maradona says that team was better than the 1986 winners.
I don't know. They were world champions, but the 1994 team looked to attack and had a lot of alternatives. We had such players as [Gabriel] Batistuta and [Diego] Simeone. We could not recover from Maradona's suspension. With him on the field we had no rivals. ●

Interview by Eric Weil

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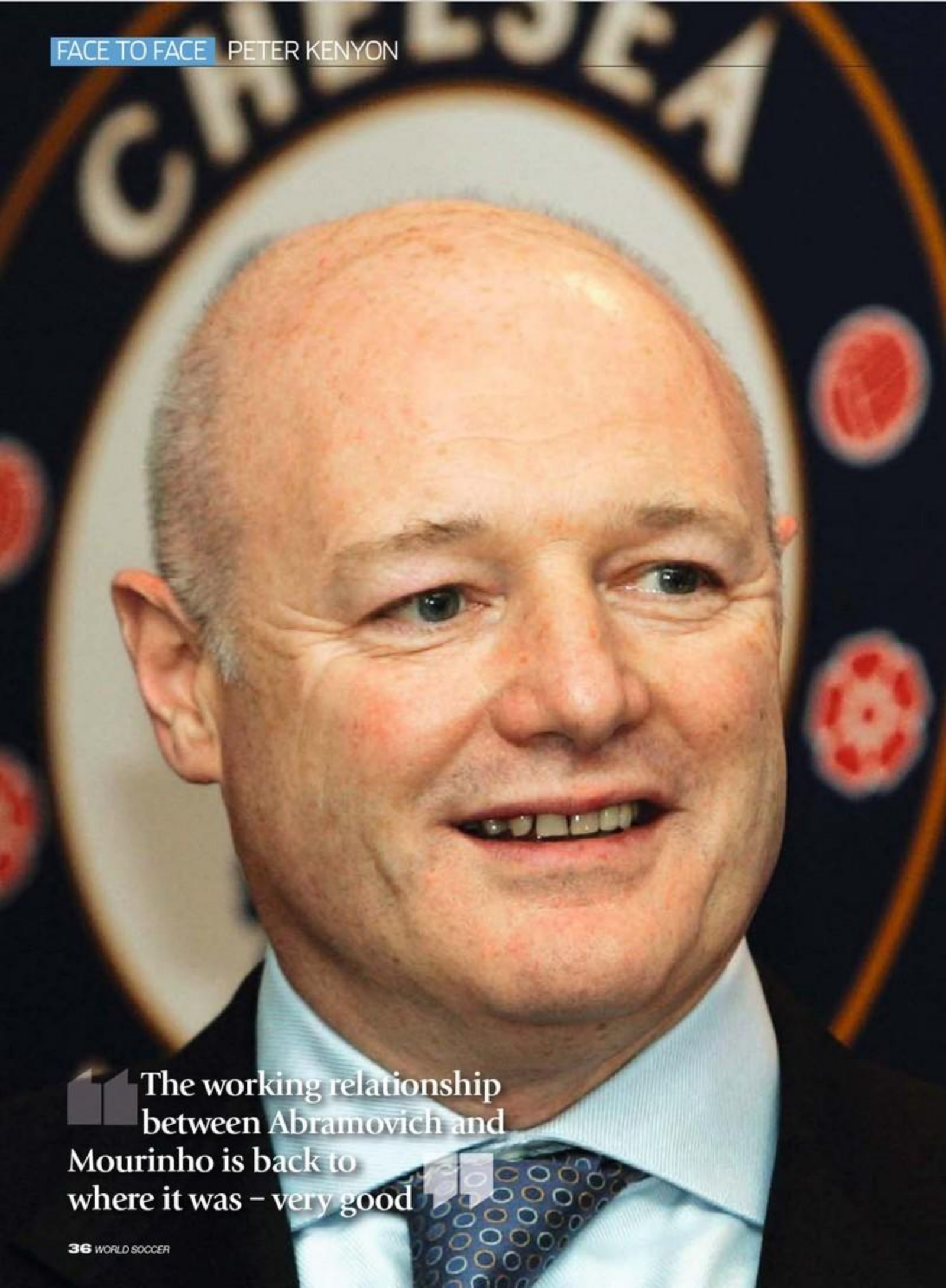


"The working relationship between Abramovich and Mourinho is back to where it was – very good"

Blue vision

Speaking before the sudden departure of Jose Mourinho, Chelsea's chief executive outlined his club's ambitious plans for the future

ARE THE big-spending days at an end for Chelsea?
It's refreshing that other clubs have taken on the mantle of big spenders but it's not over from our perspective. It's just that we sat down, as we do every season, and considered what we needed to strengthen the squad. One of the issues we had to consider was the African Nations Cup in the middle of the season and the impact that would have, that for a period of time we might need more players than we would have in a normal season. But then the type of player we bring in in those circumstances might be more of a squad player than a star. So the spending issue is more of a coincidence. We have said all along that we never believed we had to continue spending at the levels we did in the first two years under Roman Abramovich. But there is money available for the right player.

Is the target of reaching financial break-even by 2010 still achievable?
The 2010 target was never a firm statement, it was more an intention that we would reach that objective on or around that date. We are still on course. We've improved our revenue significantly and have been one of the fastest-growing clubs over the last four years. The quality of our image is very good and, three years in, we're tracking extremely well. Break-even in 2010 or 2011 is not off the agenda.

Chelsea's Asian strategy appears to contrast strongly with some other clubs, who fly out, play a few matches and fly back. You have a formal development partnership with the Asian confederation. But is Asia going to be worth all the effort everyone is putting in?
New revenue streams are developing in Asia. In the spheres of media and new media they are more advanced in some ways than we are in Europe. There are other opportunities as well. We've already seen the advent of Asian players coming to European clubs, though there has been some cynicism about the reason. In fact, there isn't an Asian player at Chelsea because we don't believe there is a player available of the quality we need. But when you look at the population figures you can see that occurring in the next few years. As for the programmes we are putting in place with the AFC, every year the Asian player of the year has the option to come to train at Chelsea. Equally, there has been a "land grab" for Asian fans but there is a difference between connecting with them long-term and attracting them just because you are the new club who has won the Premiership. It takes time – and more robust grassroots connection. If anyone says they're going to get rich out of Asian football quickly they're mistaken. We understand the longevity aspect and we cannot afford to ignore the economic prospect of China. We will also see more and more sponsorship coming out of that market.

Roman Abramovich was the first major foreign owner in English football. Why the influx of so many more foreign owners lately?
The initial attraction for foreign owners in the Premier League is the potential business opportunities that its scale and size and media awareness can bring. At Chelsea we're somewhat different; the American interest is more business-orientated than sport-orientated. I don't think that's bad because it hasn't been demonstrated that it's bad. You can't say because someone is a foreign owner he is a bad owner, nor can you assume that just because it's a business agenda it's bad for sport. There is a certain amount of scaremongering because the concept of the foreign owner is new. Of course, the "fit-and-proper-person" tests have to be carried out properly. I think it's as tight as a sports governing body can manage. There are other issues for which there are better inquiring bodies than football ones, organisations with more teeth and reach. For me, the big issue is about the way clubs are leveraged and funded, and there is still time to run before we can make a judgement call. At least at Chelsea we are spending our own money, within our own control, which sets us apart from some of the more recently-acquired clubs.

How is the working relationship now between Abramovich and Jose Mourinho?
Very good. It's back to where it was – although, being inside and living through everything earlier this year, there was a lot of exaggeration about the way it was played out. Right now everyone is back to where they need to be.

With all those football people in management, what is the division of responsibility?
It's really easy. We are working to improve Chelsea at every level and a big part of our overall sporting and business plan is to develop more talent of our own, which means building a structure that scouts the best talent – and that's the role for Frank Arnesen. We are operating on an international level and we felt it was time to bring in a director of football – just like most of the big continental clubs. That's the role for Avram Grant. Jose Mourinho's role is very clearly defined as managing and selecting and being responsible for the first team, Frank's role is running the academy with the structure beneath it, and Avram has to co-ordinate all those football activities and report to me, as chief executive, the board and the owner. Early signs are this structure is working extremely well.

What is the future for Stamford Bridge?
We're operating on a 42,000 capacity and selling out for all our games. We've said all along that to get to 55,000 would be good but we're not going to move 100 miles to achieve that. A core part of Chelsea is this location. We haven't fully given up on the idea of expanding Stamford Bridge

but we understand the difficulties of developing a 55,000 or 60,000-capacity stadium on a 13-acre site. Finding a 20-acre site in a location which would be acceptable to all of us is very difficult but we continue to pore over what we can do.

It would be an enormous decision, wouldn't it?
Of course. Some of it is about the revenues you can generate from a stadium, and right now our revenues have been as high as Manchester United achieved when Old Trafford was a 67,000-capacity stadium [it is now 76,000]. We have to be careful about what is driving this: whether this is the right thing to do from fan and team and business perspectives. Anyway, even if we decided to move tomorrow, it would be five to seven years before we could open the gates because of planning and other issues.

But revenue also depends on ticket prices and Chelsea have not always had the best press in this sphere.
The past two seasons we have held our prices. I don't think, because of other issues, we are looking to increase them. We have introduced more concession prices with two very successful price-cutting opportunities, for the FA Cup and League Cup, where every game has been sold out.

You will have been chief executive for four years in February, since you moved to Chelsea from Manchester United. Is there anything that has surprised you about the job?
One of the big differences about operating in London is the media aspect, the intensity of the attention we get. That surprised me.

UEFA president Michel Platini's new strategic council met formally for the first time recently to hear and discuss his proposals to change the access system to the Champions League. How do you view this development?
It's a major step forward. Around the table we had UEFA vice-presidents, FIFPro, the European leagues organisation and the clubs. The best decision we took was in deferring a decision on the new access proposals. That said that the council was not just about lip service; it sent out an important message about the game evolving in the right way. Michel has an awful lot of experience as a player, coach, administrator and now president of UEFA. That is a great credential. He is unbelievably passionate, and the way he presented his case was compelling. But we said this is the first time we have seen this document and we should not reject it, because we need to understand what it means. The council should not be a mere rubber stamp. This is about process. We had good, frank dialogue. All parties saw different aspects than when they first walked into the meeting.

Is G-14 dead?
G-14 is still there. Certain other structures are now in place which change what G-14 is about – I know because I was a founding member, and it was formed because then there was no mechanism for dialogue. Then UEFA created its club forum and now we have the strategic council. I don't see anything wrong with clubs getting together to discuss club issues. What has developed does not mean a death knell for G-14. As a body, though, in terms of numbers it's probably not as relevant as it was because it needs a wider population than clubs. Its purpose has to be rethought.

Bridge of highs...but Chelsea have not ruled out relocating to build a 55,000-capacity stadium

"We want the nucleus of our team to be English, we're serious about that"

Coming back to Chelsea, is your priority now winning the Champions League?
Over the last few years we have been in the semi-finals twice and we have qualified from the group stage every year, so we are starting to build a big credibility in the competition. To move forward now we have to get to the Final – and then, as we've seen in the last few years, anything can happen.

Have Andrii Shevchenko and Michael Ballack been the failures they are considered by some?
I don't subscribe to that. First and foremost, both are on long-term contracts, so their contribution was always envisaged as far more than just one season. Have we seen the best of Shevchenko and Ballack? No. Did they contribute positively? Yes, and they have continued to do so in ways that people may not have expected. For example, not only did Shevchenko score goals – which he did, though lots of people think he didn't score one! – but also the benefit he provided for Didier Drogba was significant. Ballack played an awful lot of games for us. The experience both players brought was important. There are things they brought to the club off the pitch that people don't see. We've still got to see the best of them but I'm confident we will.

When Mourinho arrived he inherited the team's "English pillar", players such as John Terry and Frank Lampard. But, over the long-term, how will you protect that "Englishness"?
We have 17 England internationals in our four age-group teams between the under-17s and the under-21s; 70 per cent of our academy are English. That's not to say we will pass up a good talent because he is not English, but our overall philosophy is that we want the nucleus of our team to be English and are very serious about that. It's got all sorts of benefits, both culturally and in terms of sport. The link of a home-grown player with the fan base is enormous, while the ability to keep players who have actually loved the club since they were youngsters is important. Not only are nine of our 21 senior players English but seven of them are London-born.

Where do you see Chelsea in 10 years?
Achieving our objectives, which is to be recognised as one of the top European clubs. That means we will have won more than one European Cup and continue to sustain ourselves as a leading club in our domestic league. On the back of that we will also have a profitable business and be recognised as a good corporate model. That is what we are building here. ●

Interview by Keir Radnedge

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

Purchasing power... Madrid's spree brought them, among others, Arjen Robben, Royston Drenthe, Christoph Metzelder, Gabriel Heinze, Pepe and Wesley Sneijder

$pend! $pend!

"La Liga clubs set a record by shelling out a colossal £373.7million on new signings, with the January window still to come. The previous best was £311m in 2000-01"

WHEN THE TRANSFER window slammed shut on August 31, some players were still trying to squeeze their way through it. As the clocks chimed midnight in Madrid and bells rang in Barcelona, footballers chasing last-minute deals had no choice but to admit defeat.

Sevilla's Daniel Alves was, much to his frustration, still Sevilla's not Chelsea's, Real Madrid's or Barcelona's. Juan Roman Riquelme was left in the lurch by Atletico Madrid after their four-man signings team couldn't agree on whether or not to buy him out of Villarreal, where he is persona non grata. Barcelona's out-of-favour forward Santi Ezquerro would not take a pay cut in return for a bit of football at Athletic Bilbao. Valencia couldn't quite find the money for Rafael Van der Vaart from Hamburg. And the Beast, Julio Baptista, will continue to prowl the Bernabeu bench after Real Madrid failed to close a deal with Milan.

There were plenty of other moves that broke down before the final day. There was no sign of Cristiano Ronaldo, Xabi Alonso or Michael Ballack in Madrid. Nor was there any sign of Kaka and Cesc Fabregas, two of the three players promised by Ramon Calderon during his successful presidential campaign in summer 2006. But the third player, Arjen Robben, did finally turn up.

In Barcelona, meanwhile, a summer of speculation had come to nothing: Samuel Eto'o and Ronaldinho were both still around.

$pend!

Once again this summer, Real Madrid flashed more cash in the transfer market than any other club in the world. Sid Lowe kicks off a special report with a review of who paid what in Spain

So was Deco, despite the best efforts of the Barca board.

But plenty of monster deals did come off. In fact, La Liga clubs set a record by shelling out a colossal £373.7million on new signings, with the January window still to come. The previous best was £311m in 2000-01, when Real Madrid paid £42m for Luis Figo, and this summer's figure was more than £200m more than last season.

Santander record

Promoted Valladolid were the most frugal club, with a miserly outlay of £0.9m. Racing Santander had looked as if they would spend nothing having brought in seven players on frees but then broke their own spending record with £9.2m on three late signings – Polish striker Ebi Smoralek, brilliantly presented alongside the club's new cuddly cow mascot, Congolese forward Mohammed Tchite and Swiss keeper Fabio Coltorti.

Racing's spree was funded by the £12.5m sale of Serb striker Nikola Zigic to Valencia, who also signed German keeper Timo Hildebrand, defenders Alexis and Ivan Helguera, midfielder Sunny, forwards Javier Arizmendi and Juan Manuel Mata, and, late on, Portuguese midfielder Manuel Fernandes for £11.8m.

Villarreal spent £28.48m, Zaragoza clinched French midfielder Peter Luccin at the last minute to take their total to £23.4m, and Sevilla broke their transfer record by spending £8.3m on Ivorian forward Arouna Kone. That took Sevilla's total outlay to £19.7m – and that, for the first time, was without selling anyone. Even Getafe managed to spend more than £13m, and while Athletic Bilbao missed out on Ezquerro, they still somehow found enough Basques to write cheques to the tune of almost £10m.

Traditional big spenders Atletico Madrid did the unthinkable and sold Fernando Torres but then splashed out even more than normal, spending £54.1m on nine players, including £14.6m on Portuguese winger Simao Sabrosa, £13.2m on Uruguayan forward Diego Forlan and £9m on Spanish

striker Jose Antonio Reyes, fresh from having clinched the title for local rivals Real. Barcelona, meanwhile, reacted quickly to losing the league title to Real by buying four strong, experienced players for £48.5 before the dust had even settled on last season: defenders Eric Abidal and Gabriel Milito, defensive midfielder Yaya Toure and, of course, £16m Thierry Henry.

But trumping them all – and by a huge distance – were Real Madrid. Calderon seems to enjoy putting his hand in his pocket almost as much as putting his foot in his mouth. Never mind the £330m outlay over six years of predecessor Florentino Perez; Calderon spent £75m on eight players in his first season and a further £82.67m on eight more this summer, including £20m on Pepe, £25m on Robben and £18.8m on Wesley Sneijder.

That's 16 players in and over £150m spent in just over 12 months. But Real have recouped plenty of that – £39.3m – this year with the sale of Ronaldo, Jonathan Woodgate, Carlos Diogo, Diego Lopez, Raul Bravo, Alvaro Mejia, Emerson, Javier Portillo, Cicinho, Alvaro Negredo and Ruben De la Red.

"Madrid won the League last season, but that was not enough for president Calderon. Capello was sacked as coach and his replacement, Schuster, given a clear brief: win the League and do it in style"

Captain's shield...Real's Raul keeps possession against Atletico as La Liga gets under way

Those dizzying figures show how much Calderon wanted to outdo Perez but also erase the memory of his own first season at the club. It was time for a revolution and, as in any revolution, heads had to roll.

Real might have won the League for the first time in four seasons but that was not enough for Calderon, stung by the boos – and the yawns – so often heard at the Bernabeu. Coach Fabio Capello was sacked, with Bernd Schuster brought in from Getafe to replace him. The German's brief was clear: win the League and do it in style. It was time for Madrid to play the beautiful game.

More to the point, it was time for them to play total football. Never mind Barcelona's deep Dutch tradition, from Johan Cruyff to Ronald Koeman and countless others; now it was Madrid turning to Holland. Having only ever had two Dutch players – Clarence Seedorf and Johnny Metgod – suddenly they had four at the same time: Robben, Sneijder and Royston Drenthe joining Ruud Van Nistelrooy.

Madrid had tried the English crew, the boys from Brazil and the Italian job, now it was time for the "Tulip Team" (seriously). There could hardly have been a clearer statement of intent.

But if there was something oddly laudable about sacking a winning coach because of a commitment to playing attacking, entertaining football, there also appeared to be something deeply foolish about it. Why rip up a successful team? How could you sack

The world's highest-spending clubs this summer

1 REAL MADRID

£82.67m

The Spanish champions' outlay included £25m on Arjen Robben (Chelsea), £20m on Pepe (Porto), £18.8m on Wesley Sneijder (Ajax) and £8m on Gabriel Heinze (Manchester United).

‹ Robben

2 MANCHESTER UNITED

£60m

Anderson (Porto) and Nani (Sporting Lisbon) arrived for a combined £31m, and Owen Hargreaves for £17m (Bayern Munich). In addition, United paid £2m compensation to West Ham for Carlos Tevez and then a reported £10m to MSI, the company that apparently still owns his economic rights.

‹ Hargreaves

3 ATLETICO MADRID

£54.1m

The spree included £14.6m on Simao Sabrosa (Benfica), £13.2m on Diego Forlan (Villarreal), £9m on Jose Antonio Reyes (Arsenal) and £4m on Luis Garcia (Liverpool).

‹ Reyes

Derby delight...Wesley Sneijder is mobbed after scoring on his league debut for Real in the opening-day defeat of Atletico

the coach that ended Madrid's longest trophy drought in over half a century?

"Capello was the medicine we needed in the short-term; now we need something different," Calderon explained. Privately, too, there was a realisation that Madrid had been fortunate to win the League last season and that they would be unlikely to get the same luck again.

The bar could not have been set higher for Schuster, and the early signs were far from positive. A dreadful pre-season in which Madrid were beaten five times was followed by a 5-3 thrashing at home by Sevilla in the Spanish Super Cup. Calderon called a crisis meeting, while *Marca* splashed its front cover with the question everyone was asking: "Where's the beautiful game?"

Meanwhile, with the Madrid derby as the league curtain-raiser, Atletico president Enrique Cerezo ignored bitter experience to gleefully declare: "We could cause a scandal at the Bernabeu."

He really should have known better. Real played some neat football in patches (although it was Atletico who had the most shots) and ran out 2-1 winners. Suddenly, there was a sign of life; suddenly, the enthusiasm was flooding back; suddenly, sacking Capello was not so stupid.

Next up, and away, were Villarreal – unbeaten since April and on a nine-game winning streak. But with Sneijder turning in a quite awesome display, Guti dictating the play from midfield and even captain Raul looking rejuvenated, Madrid simply blew their hosts apart, 5-0.

There was the beautiful game. How long it will last is, of course, another question, but for now it's Madrid fans chanting *Viva la revolucion!*

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

4 LIVERPOOL

£51.7m

The Reds spent a club record £26.5m on Fernando Torres (Atletico Madrid), as well as £11.5m on Ryan Babel (Ajax), £5m on Yossi Benayoun (West Ham), a reported £5m on Lucas Leiva (Gremio) and £1.7m on Sebastian Leto (Lanus).

‹ Babel

5 BARCELONA

£48.5m

The Catalans' headline purchase was Thierry Henry (Arsenal) for £16m. They also bought Gabriel Milito (£13.8m, Barcelona), Eric Abidal (£10.4m, Lyon) and Yaya Toure (£8.3m, Monaco).

‹ Henry

6 BAYERN MUNICH

£47.3m

The Bavarians' record spending spree brought in eye-catching attacking trio Franck Ribery (£17.8m, Marseille), Miroslav Klose (£8.5m, Werder Bremen) and Luca Toni (£7.8m, Fiorentina). Hamit Altintop, Jan Schlaudraff, Jose Ernesto Sosa and Marcell Jansen were other arrivals.

‹ Toni and Klose

Better than

Real Madrid fans have a new hero – and he's wearing the No 23 shirt. Keir Radnedge reports

NO ZIDANE, no Beckham, no Ronaldo, no Roberto Carlos; the fan jury remains out on Robinho; and Raul and Iker Casillas lack that mystical foreign allure. Hence there is a gap at the Bernabeu for a new "crack", a player who can rise above the team while remaining essential to them.

Step forward, then, Wesley Sneijder. The mantle of expectation has fallen on the Dutchman's slim shoulders only a matter of weeks after his arrival at Real Madrid and with temperatures in Amsterdam barely cooled after the hide-and-seek of his transfer.

The initial assurance still sits out there on the internet, dated July 20 and reading: "Wesley Sneijder will be an Ajax player for one more season. The 23-year-old midfielder ...announced his decision during a press conference in De Lutte, where Ajax hold their training camp. Managing director Maarten Fontein was pleased with Sneijder's decision, saying: 'This is very good for everyone, for Wesley, for the team, for the club and for our fans, especially with the ambition that Ajax have this year.' Sneijder said: 'With this team we can accomplish many things. This decision gives me peace of mind and we have the chance to have a fantastic season with Ajax. We are gunning for the championship and can go far in the Champions League.' "

Quick off the mark...Sneijder celebrates the second of his two goals against Villarreal

"Impossible" deal done

Fast forward to August 12 and suddenly the world has turned on its head for the youngster. Suddenly, the "impossible" deal is being done, for a Dutch record £18.8million, and Ajax technical director Martin Van Geel is saying: "We are proud that after Ryan Babel's move to Liverpool another player from our youth programme has joined a top European club for a lot of money. Obviously we are sad that we have to miss one of our best players in the very important qualifying matches for the Champions League. At the same time, we could not deny Wesley this opportunity."

In football only goals carry value. Words are worth next to nothing, or even plain nothing in the case of Sneijder.

But then this is how it has been with Dutch football over the past 35 years. The world has learned to expect more than they can, ultimately, deliver.

The national team and top clubs such as Ajax, Feyenoord and PSV Eindhoven have featured among the contenders to win European competitions; and Dutch players have been in demand all over Europe. The

The world's highest-spending clubs this summer

7 SHAKHTAR DONETSK

£41.5m

The biggest spenders in eastern Europe by some distance. The main signings were Nery Castillo (£14m, Olympiakos), Willian (£9.5m, Corinthians), Ilsinho (£7m, Sao Paulo), Cristiano Lucarelli (£6m, Livorno), Oleksandr Gladkyy (£3.5m, Kharkiv), Volodymyr Yezerskyi (£750,000, Dnipro) and Volodymyr Priyemov (£750,000, Metalurh Donetsk).

‹ Castillo and Ilsinho

8 TOTTENHAM

£39.9m

Spurs spent a club record £16.5m on Darren Bent (Charlton), as well as £8m on Younes Kaboul (Auxerre), £5.4m on Kevin Prince-Boateng (Hertha Berlin) and £5m on Gareth Bale (Southampton).

‹ Bent

9 MANCHESTER CITY

£38m

The Thaksin Shinawatra-funded spree brought in Rolando Bianchi (£8.8m, Reggina), Elano (£8m, Shakhtar Donetsk), Vedran Corluka (£7m, Dinamo Zagreb), Valeri Bojinov (£6m, Fiorentina), Martin Petrov (£4.7m, Atletico Madrid), Gelson Fernandes (£2m, Sion) and Javier Garrido (£1.5m, Real Sociedad).

‹ Elano

Beckham?

problem is that many fail to deliver what is promised – and this is every Madrid fan's fear.

Will Sneijder, who has signed a five-year contract, prove to be a prize-winning successor in the style of Johan Cruyff, Ruud Gullit, Marco Van Basten and Frank Rijkaard or will he follow in the not-quite-fulfilled status of such as Bryan Roy, Rafael Van der Vaart and Patrick Kluivert?

Rijkaard, now the Barcelona coach, has no doubts about Sneijder's quality. Indeed, Barca pondered about making a bid earlier this year but then became distracted by other transfer targets. He says: "Sneijder is imaginative, has an accurate pass, good shot and scores goals. On top of that he is two-footed, is a winner by nature and can play in midfield or just behind the attack." That makes him what the Spanish call a *todoterreno* – an "all-pitch" footballer.

Hand-picked

Sneijder, born in Utrecht, was picked up by the Ajax academy as a winger or wide-running midfielder. In a short time, after moving into central midfield in either a holding or attacking role, he was hand-picked for the reserves by coach Danny Blind, who soon recommended his further promotion to then senior team boss Ronald Koeman.

Sneijder made his first league start at 18 in a 6-0 win at Willem II and then, in "one mad week", in April 2003, played against Milan in the Champions League and made his senior Holland debut against Portugal, aged 18 years 325 days.

Later that year he scored against Moldova and Scotland in the Euro 2004 qualifiers – he was Holland's outstanding player in their play-off defeat of the Scots – then made two appearances as a substitute in the Portugal finals as Holland reached the last four.

In 175 appearances for Ajax, Sneijder scored 55 goals, many of them from his trademark bending free-kicks. But he also displayed temperament problems, being fined in 2004-05 for gesturing at Koeman after being substituted in the Dutch Super Cup.

Sneijder's final season at Ajax was his best, scoring 18 goals in 30 league games as he relished the freedom provided by the arrival of veteran midfielder Edgar Davids.

Sneijder has been quick to acknowledge the help he has received in adjusting to Spanish football, life and language from compatriot Ruud Van Nistelrooy, saying: "He has been almost like a father to me."

Not that the youngster will need such support for long. "Already he reminds me of another blond guy who played for Madrid once and struck the ball like that," said coach Bernd Schuster, comparing Sneijder with himself.

Schuster was hired to put a smile back on Madrid's footballing face after the qualified success of the scrapping style imposed by Fabio Capello. So far the switch is working. As Sneijder said: "All the players are enjoying our football. But we must remain calm and keep working hard because this has just begun. As for me, I have been very lucky to have had such a fantastic start. David Beckham? I don't like to be compared with other players. He has his own characteristics and I have mine. We are different players."

Indeed. Beckham joined Madrid in 2003 when he was 28, five years older than Sneijder. On that basis, the Dutchman has plenty of time to improve – a frightening thought for Madrid's opponents. If, that is, he follows in the path of Cruyff rather than Kluivert.

> **"Sneijder is imaginative, has an accurate pass, good shot and scores goals. On top of that he is two-footed, is a winner by nature and can play in midfield or just behind the attack"**

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard is a big fan of his compatriot

Madrid were already following his progress closely and, after the failure of their over-optimistic bid to prise Kaka away from Milan, Sneijder became their next target. Having got him, they also handed him the No 23 shirt that David Beckham had relinquished on his departure to Los Angeles Galaxy.

Sneijder quickly set about replacing Beckham in the hearts of the Bernabeu faithful by starring and scoring from free-kicks in both the first two league games, at home to neighbours Atletico and away to Villarreal. His swerving effort against the latter, one of two goals in the 5-0 win, was as good – if not better – than anything Beckham had produced.

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

10 SUNDERLAND

£35.87m

The newly-promoted club paid a record £9m for Craig Gordon (Hearts) and also signed Kenwyne Jones (£6m, Southampton), Kieran Richardson (£5.5m, Manchester United), Michael Chopra (£5m, Cardiff), Greg Halford (£2.5m, Reading), Danny Higginbotham (£2.5m, Stoke), Paul McShane (£2.5m, West Brom), Dickson Etuhu (Norwich, £1.5m) and Russell Anderson (£1m, Aberdeen).

‹ Gordon

11 JUVENTUS

£34.38m

The Old Lady made a big investment on her return to Serie A. Tiago (£9m, Lyon) was the most expensive buy, followed by Vincenzo Iaquinta (£7.4m, Udinese), Jorge Andrade (£6.9m, Porto) and Sergio Almiron (£6.2m, Empoli). Juve also paid £4.3m to buy out Antonio Nocerino and Cristian Molinaro from their joint-ownership deals with Piacenza and Siena respectively.

‹ Iaquinta

12 VALENCIA

£32.96m

Big buys included Nikola Zigic (£12.5m, Racing Santander), Manuel Fernandes (£11.8m, Benfica), Javier Arizmendi (£4.5m, Atletico Madrid) and Alexis (£4.2m, Getafe).

‹ Zigic

Sitting pretty

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti tells Paddy Agnew why there was no need for his club, the European champions, to spend heavily this summer

Picture of contentment...Ancelotti ponders the start of another adventure at home and in Europe

IF YOU SUGGEST to Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti that his side are too old and that perhaps the club have failed to adequately strengthen themselves with new signings this summer, he just smiles. In fact, as he sits at the boardroom table at Milan's lair, Milanello, he sounds very upbeat about the new season.

"The mistake that everyone makes is to think that this is an old team, but I say that perhaps we haven't even reached full maturity yet," he says. "I am happy that people think that. We have players such as [Massimo] Oddo and [Marek] Jankulovski who were in their first season in [the Champions League] last year, and then we have a backbone to the team, guys such as [Gennaro] Gattuso and [Andrea] Pirlo, who are just now at their full maturity. When I look forward to this season, I get a distinctly positive feeling. Our win in the Champions League was a huge stimulus, it has done so much for us."

So, what lies ahead? First, there is the defence of that crown to consider. Ancelotti says: "We start off every season wanting to win everything but the Champions League is something special, it's part of our DNA."

On the home front, he argues that his side will give reigning champions and city cousins Internazionale a real run for their money. "The gap between us and Inter of last season has been wiped out," he insists. "Right now, Inter, Milan and Roma could all win the title, while Juventus, too, could yet play a role."

So just how special was that win over Liverpool in Athens, Milan's seventh

The world's highest-spending clubs this summer

13 WEST HAM

£29.6m

The club's new Icelandic owners bankrolled the purchase of Craig Bellamy (£7.5m, Liverpool), Scott Parker (£7m, Newcastle), Julien Faubert (£6.1m, Bordeaux), Kieron Dyer (£6m, Newcastle) and Freddie Ljungberg (£3m, Arsenal).

‹ Bellamy

14 VILLARREAL

£28.48m

New arrivals included Giuseppe Rossi (£6.9m, Manchester United), Rio Mavuba (£5.6m, Bordeaux), Angel Lopez (£4.2m, Celta Vigo) and Diego Lopez (£4.2m, Real Madrid). Villarreal also made Jon Dahl Tomasson's loan deal from Stuttgart permanent.

‹ Rossi

15 PORTSMOUTH

£27m

A major spree brought in Sulley Muntari (£7m, Udinese), John Utaka (£7m, Rennes), David Nugent (£6m, Preston), Arnold Mvuemba (£2m, Rennes) and Glen Johnson (£3m, Chelsea). Also, Pape Bouba Diop was signed from Fulham for an undisclosed fee, believed to be £2m.

‹ Utaka

Fall guy...injury-plagued Ronaldo has not played since suffering a thigh problem in pre-season training

"The mistake everyone makes is to think that this is an old team, but I say that perhaps we haven't even reached full maturity yet. When I look forward to this season I get a distinctly positive feeling"

European Cup triumph? Twelve months ago, they had hardly looked like Champions League winners. They had started off the season under the shadow of the *Calciopoli* match-fixing scandal. Not only were the club penalised eight points for the 2006-07 season but also the deduction from their previous season's tally meant that they dropped to third place from second in the final 2005-06 Serie A table and were thus forced to enter the Champions League qualifiers instead of going direct into the group stage.

They did progress, beating Red Star Belgrade 3-1 on aggregate, but otherwise had a difficult start. August is traditionally a pre-season training month for Italian clubs and key Milan players such as World Cup winners Pirlo and Gattuso and Brazilian Kaka showed up late for training in the wake of their exertions in Germany. The squad had also been weakened by the sale of talismanic striker Andrii Shevchenko to Chelsea. In addition, the *Calciopoli* scandal had seriously undermined the team's mental well-being.

Almost immediately, Milan were out of the Serie A running (because of their points penalty but also some indifferent results) and hardly distinguished themselves by losing their last two Champions League group games, 1-0 to AEK in Athens and 2-0 to Lille at San Siro.

"It's always our hope to win the Champions League but last season we pulled it off in the midst of many difficulties," Ancelotti says. "At one stage, there was the risk that this Milan might have finished its cycle, but the players came good. The turning point was undoubtedly the second leg away to Bayern Munich [in the quarter-finals; Milan won 2-0, 4-2 on aggregate]. For me this was the most difficult Champions League campaign of all but for that reason the most satisfying, the best win of my career."

Certainly that win in Athens went some way to laying the ghost of one of Milan's most embarrassing defeats, against Liverpool in the Final two years earlier. Ancelotti does not deny this but his recollection of that extraordinary night in Istanbul is not what you might expect.

"For me that was one of the best games ever played by Milan under my coaching," he says. "Certainly, it was as good a performance as our 3-0 win over Manchester United last season [in the semi-final second leg]. If I think back on the game in that way, then I feel much less sad. Everything passes – maybe it would have been worse to have won in Istanbul and lost in Athens. Perhaps that was the price we had to pay, losing in Istanbul."

Pato up his sleeve

As Milan prepared for the new season, there were those only too willing to predict that they would fall flat on their faces. Critics pointed to the attack, for example, and predicted serious problems – Ronaldo suffered a thigh injury in pre-season training and has not played since; Alberto Gilardino is out of form; and old man Pippo Inzaghi cannot keep going for ever. Ancelotti, however, does not seem worried, saying: "Ronaldo's problems are a short-term thing, we'll sort them out. As for Gilardino and Inzaghi, I'm more than happy with them." He also pointed out that he has up his sleeve the club's main signing of the summer – Brazilian 18-year-old Alexandre Pato, bought from Internacional for £15.2million but ineligible for competitive games until January because of Italian federation regulations. (Brazilian midfielder Emerson was Milan's only other buy of note, from Real Madrid.)

16 FULHAM

£25.28m

The Cottagers' biggest buy was Diomansy Kamara (£6m, West Brom). They also signed Steven Davis (£4m, Aston Villa), Hameur Bouazza (£3.5m, Watford), Paul Konchesky (£3.3m, West Ham), Chris Baird (£3m, Southampton), Lee Cook (£2.5m, QPR), David Healy (£1.5m, Leeds), Dejan Stefanovic (£1m, Portsmouth) and Aaron Hughes (£1m, Aston Villa).

‹ Kamara

17 ROMA

£25.26m

The raft of signings included Cicinho (£6.2m, Real Madrid), Juan (£4.9m, Bayer Leverkusen), Antunes (£4.1m, Pacos Ferreira), Ludovic Giuly (£2.2m, Barcelona), Mauro Esposito (£1.4m, Cagliari) and Ahmed Barusso (£1.2m, Rimini). Roma also paid £5.2m to make Mirko Vucinic's move from Lecce permanent.

‹ Giuly

18 NEWCASTLE

£25.2m

Another big-spending summer on Tyneside with the arrivals of Jose Enrique Sanchez (£6.5m, Villarreal), Alan Smith (£6m, Manchester United), Joey Barton (£5.8m, Manchester City), David Rozehnal (£2.9m, Paris Saint-Germain), Abdoulaye Faye (£2m, Bolton) and Habib Beye (£2m, Marseille).

‹ Sanchez

How does the teenager compare with established Milan superstar and compatriot Kaka? "Pato strikes me as much more timid than Kaka, but in training he surprises us with amazing things, just as Kaka did at the same stage," Ancelotti says. "Pato will be very useful for us, he can play with all of the other strikers because he puts himself about a lot, looks to shoot on goal and also looks to lay on the final pass."

In the meantime, until Pato is ready, Kaka could well be asked to step into a front-line role, playing as the second striker, a position he has filled in many games in recent seasons.

"Before a match, I never tell Kaka where to play. He handles the situations himself, he decides whether to move forward or back 10 metres. He follows his instinct, and that is just fine by me," says the coach.

Ancelotti's admiration for Kaka, arguably the most important player on the road to Athens last summer, is no secret. "If they don't give Kaka the European player of the year award, I'll go along to the offices of *France Football* [the magazine that organises the vote] and chain myself to the railings."

Star in the making...Milan's Brazilian new boy Alexandre Pato takes on the Dynamo Kyiv defence in a friendly

Talisman Maldini

Milan will also be relying on familiar names in defence, with 39-year-old talisman Paolo Maldini still likely to be a commanding presence. Ancelotti dismisses the notion that the former national team captain might be too old or that he owes his team place to his remarkable club record.

The coach says: "He brings so much quality and experience to the team. He is everything ...he has his place on the team because he deserves it, and he knows that."

Maldini, of course, is just one of many Italian "icons" handled by Ancelotti. Arguably, however, the most difficult "star" to handle is club owner Silvio Berlusconi, the former prime minister. Given the now opposition leader's penchant for sticking his nose into footballing matters, offering the coach very public advice on tactics and team selection, is he not a problem for the coach?

Not at all, says Ancelotti. "We talk often, he keeps himself constantly informed about the team, but he has never imposed anything on me and he would never do it because Berlusconi is an intelligent man. For Milan, Berlusconi is everything, he has set the bar for the club, laid down the rules of behaviour and determined the club's philosophy. He is absolutely not a heavy presence, he's very rarely here. Indeed, if he were here more often, it would be easier for me to train this team."

Said like a good company man. If you are looking for polemics or outrageous comments, you have got the wrong guy. Ancelotti long ago learned to play the media game. He is not the type to bite the hand that feeds him with what is still the highest-paid squad in Italy (the annual wage bill is £83m).

As the coach heads into his seventh season in charge of Milan, one is tempted to wonder if he owes his longevity to his impeccable company credentials (as a player he won Serie A and the European Cup with Milan) and impeccable company behaviour. Maybe to an extent, but his talent as a coach should never be ignored.

Ancelotti is not only a fine tactician but also knows how to motivate his players. He has the trophies to prove it – two European Cups (the other was in 2004), the 2003-04 Serie A title, the Italian Cup in 2003. In the wake of the Istanbul defeat and in the midst of the *Calciopoli* scandal, he showed all the skills of an inspirational psychologist.

"I have been lucky to work with clubs that gave me time, such as Parma, Juventus and Milan. But then, the results help too," he says. So they do.

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

The world's highest-spending clubs this summer

19 LYON

£24.62m

The French champions made four major signings – Kader Keita (£12.5m, Lille), Fabio Grosso (£4.9m, Internazionale), Mathieu Bodmer (£4.5m, Lille) and Anderson (£2.8m, Benfica).

‹ Bodmer

20 INTERNAZIONALE

£23.9m

The Italian champions signed David Suazo (£9.7m, Cagliari), Cristian Chivu (£9m, Roma) and Nelson Rivas (£5.2m, River Plate).

‹ Chivu

21 ZARAGOZA

£23.4m

New players include Roberto Ayala (£4.2m, Villarreal) and Javier Paredes (£1.1m, Getafe). Zaragoza also made the loan signings of Andres D'Alessandro (Wolfsburg) and Carlos Diogo (Real Madrid) permanent for a total of £5.5m.

‹ Ayala

Cash and burn?

The plight of Leeds United offers a stark warning to free-spending Premier League clubs, says David Conn

THE WORLD KNEW that the 2007-08 Premier League season was to start with the 20 clubs digesting the first slice of their enormous, £2.7billion, three-year feast from TV rights, but there was nevertheless a powerful whiff of overheating around the spending that dominated the summer.

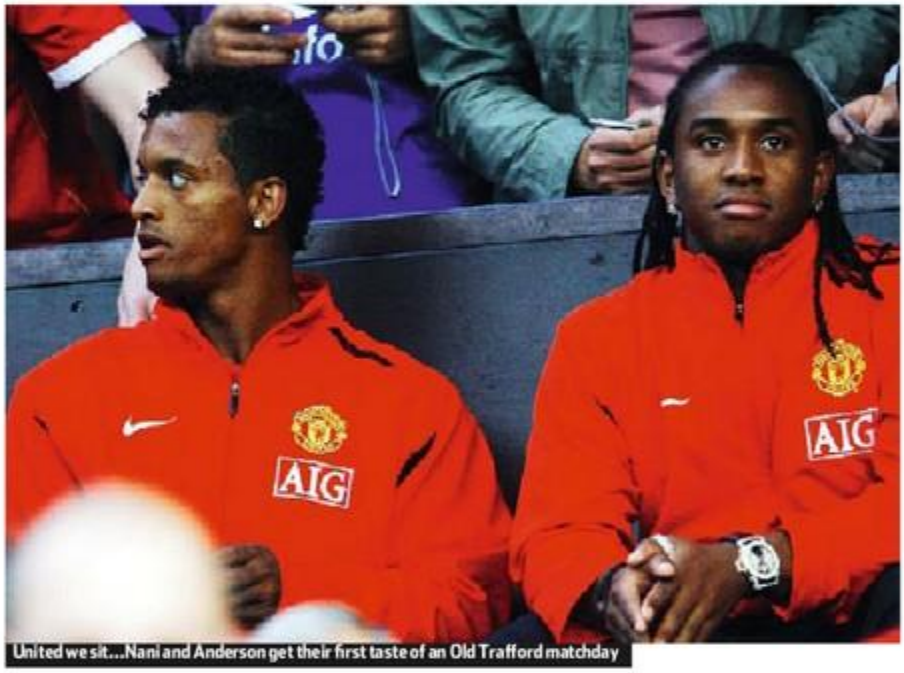
Manchester United kicked it off in May with the 2006-07 championship trophy only just secured in the Old Trafford cabinet, signing winger Nani from Sporting Lisbon and Brazilian midfielder Anderson from Porto, for fees reportedly rising to £35million. United followed that with £17m for Owen Hargreaves from Bayern Munich, then with the protracted, disputed acquisition of Carlos Tevez, eventually paying £10m to sign the Argentinian on loan from MSI, the company that, despite so many legal proceedings, still apparently owns Tevez's economic rights.

Liverpool were next to make their statement of intent. The new American owners, Tom Hicks and George Gillett, seemed finally to accede to the pleas of manager Rafael Benitez for a championship-enabling budget, first breaking the club's transfer record by paying £26.5m for Spain striker Fernando Torres from Atletico Madrid in early July. A mini-deluge followed, including Dutch forward Ryan Babel from Ajax for £11.5m and Israeli midfielder Yossi Benayoun (West Ham) for £5m. Later in July, Liverpool unveiled their grand, eye-pleasing designs for a new 60,000-seat stadium on Stanley Park, virtually next door to Anfield, with a projected cost of £300m.

Meanwhile, neighbours Everton were paying what seemed excessive amounts for two English players – Phil Jagielka from Sheffield United for £4m and Wigan's Leighton Baines for £5m.

Two other clubs, both under new foreign owners, also stood out in the market – West Ham, whose Icelandic investors appear unable to walk past a transfer window without writing a large cheque, and Manchester City, whose sudden, late-August assembly of a squad for new manager Sven Goran Eriksson followed the controversial £21.6m takeover by former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

West Ham would point out that their apparent profligacy was balanced by selling captain Nigel Reo-Coker to Aston Villa for £7.5m. But it was not so much the prices paid – £3m for Freddy Ljungberg from Arsenal, £7m for Scott Parker from Newcastle, £7.5m to Liverpool for Craig Bellamy,



United we sit...Nani and Anderson get their first taste of an Old Trafford matchday

22 MIDDLESBROUGH

£22.5m

The signing of Jonathan Woodgate (£7m, Real Madrid) on a permanent deal was the biggest outlay. New arrivals were Mido (£6m, Tottenham), Gary O'Neil (£5m, Portsmouth), Luke Young (Charlton, £2.5m) and Jeremie Aliadiere (£2m, Arsenal).

‹ Mido

23 ARSENAL

£21.6m

The Gunners' actual outlay is likely to have been significantly higher, but Lassana Diarra joined from Chelsea for an undisclosed fee. The other big buys were Eduardo da Silva (£10.4m, Dinamo Zagreb), Bakary Sagna (£6.2m, Auxerre), Lukasz Fabianski (£3m, Legia Warsaw) and Havard Nordtveit (£2m, Haugesund).

‹ Eduardo

24 WOLFSBURG

£20.8m

The Bundesliga side bought a whole host of players, including Grafite (£5.5m, Le Mans) and Jan Simunek (£3.5m, Sparta Prague).

‹ Grafite, with coach Felix Magath

£6m for Kieron Dyer from Newcastle – but rather the wages reportedly on offer (£75,000 a week for Parker the most notable) that gave Upton Park the air of wanton extravagance.

The new signings were accompanied by some eye-catching renewals of contracts, most prominently John Terry's acceptance of a reported £135,000 a week from Chelsea. He and Frank Lampard were said to be holding out for wages equal to the £130,000-plus being paid to Chelsea's galactic signings of last summer, Andrii Shevchenko and Michael Ballack, and £100,000 is now said to be the norm for the top players in the English game.

The staggering size of those pay packets now dwarfs the first spiral of wage inflation in the mid-1990s when, in a Premier League newly brimming with Sky TV money, Blackburn Rovers' owner Jack Walker was spending portions of his Jersey-based fortune to win a title for the club. Blackburn astonished the rest of football by paying striker Chris Sutton, signed from Norwich, £10,000 a week.

Mick McGuire, deputy chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, identified the Sutton deal as a milestone in players' fuel-injected acceleration from the run-a-pub-in-retirement norm of the 1970s to today's Bentley Continental-driving, secure-for-life millionaires.

"It was an absolutely unbelievable deal," McGuire said. "This, for Sutton, 21 and uncapped, was incredible money. It was the quantum leap in footballers' wages."

This summer we appeared to see a repeat of what happens every time the clubs congratulate themselves on another fabulous TV deal: the players and their agents rub their hands and fill their boots. Before the Premier League's 2001 deal, Roy Keane was reported to have set the standard, doubling his wages at Manchester United to £52,000 a week. Three years later, Sol Campbell set the bar at twice that, reportedly breaking the £100,000-a-week threshold at Arsenal. This summer, the clubs' improved fortunes from TV were again being poured out immediately in inflated wages.

Big deal...Liverpool broke their transfer record when paying £26.5m for Fernando Torres from Atletico Madrid

Leeds collapse

But if the clubs, or their new owners, needed a warning about overspending in the name of ambition it was provided by another story that rumbled through the summer. Leeds United, the iconic 1970s team who had seemingly been reborn and reached the Champions League semi-finals as recently as 2001, collapsed into administration in May after being relegated to the third flight of English football, League One, for the first time.

When, in 2000-01, Leeds were gleefully unveiling expensive signings such as Rio Ferdinand, Mark Viduka and Robbie Keane, few attempted to poop the party by asking whether the club could afford them. It is a sad truth that administration, when insolvency accountants produce a thick report for creditors, reveals more detail than ever a club does in the good times.

As we now know, Leeds' playing revival was partly based on £22m owed to a scheme, Registered European Football Finance, that arranged the sale and leaseback of players, then £60m borrowed to buy stars for the manager, David O'Leary. Chairman Peter Ridsdale, when he finally admitted the club had financial problems, uttered the now-classic summing up: "We lived the dream."

That dream sent Leeds into the nightmare of double relegation and administration with debts of £35m. Not all the blame can be put on the shoulders of Ridsdale and his fellow directors during the dream time, but much of

The world's highest-spending clubs this summer

25 EVERTON

£20.3m

The Toffees spent a club record £11.3m on Nigerian striker Yakubu Aiyegbeni from Middlesbrough. They also bought Leighton Baines (£5m, Wigan) and Phil Jagielka (£4m, Sheffield United).

‹ Aiyegbeni

26 SEVILLA

£19.7m

The UEFA Cup holders spent big on Arouna Kone (£8.3m, PSV Eindhoven), Seydou Keita (£3.5m, Lens), Tom De Mul (£2.8m, Ajax) and Aquivaldo Mosquera (£5.1m, Pachuca).

‹ Kone

27 MARSEILLE

£19.06m

The French league runners-up splashed out on Djibril Cisse (£5.5m, Liverpool; permanent from loan), Karim Ziani (£5.5m, Sochaux), Gael Givet (£3.5m, Monaco) and Vincent Gragnic (£550,000, Libourne Saint-Seurin).

‹ Cisse

Living the dream...Rio Ferdinand is introduced to the Leeds fans by chairman Peter Ridsdale

it dates from then. Some of the debts, including thousands still owed to former players, and chunks of the £7.7m owed in tax and VAT, were carried over directly from that era. The administration was never pretty, and because the club was bought by a company, chaired by Ken Bates, without going through a CVA (Company Voluntary Arrangement) agreement of creditors, Leeds began their season in the lower reaches docked 15 points by the Football League.

More sensible

As the Premier League began in sunshine with some thrilling performances and fascinating results, apparently the best of times, it is difficult to know if a Leeds could be happening now. McGuire, who represents players in contract negotiations for the PFA, believes clubs are more sensible.

"Throughout English football, clubs were given a dose of reality," he says. "Wages are certainly increasing, and there is a new top level, certainly, but we do not have great inflation across the game. Clubs are more realistic about their level and the wages they can afford to pay."

According to agents and club sources, Premier League wages occupy a wide spectrum, from Terry's reported £135,000 a week to about £20,000 for youngsters playing regularly at middle-ranking clubs. McGuire may well be right that clubs inhabit a new professionalism, and are less dazzled by the glories on offer for success, but it is difficult to know for sure.

For all the talk, after Lord Stevens' "bungs" inquiry, that the game has become more transparent, payments to agents are not disclosed by any Premier League club, and wages only in a lump sum total in club accounts usually published about 18 months after the period in question. West Ham's next accounts are due this December, but they will cover the year to May 31, 2007. We will have to wait until December 2008 to see how this summer's signings fit into the club's budget, and discover whether the Hammers are living within their means or in their dreams. Only then, too, will the public know if or how much the Icelandic owners are investing in the club.

The recent Premier League takeovers have sparked a vague notion among fans that a new generation of benefactors is spending millions, but that does not reflect reality. The Glazer family borrowed massively to take over Manchester United, and now the club themselves must pay interest of £62m a year on debts of £660m before any money is spared for players. But the full reported £35m for Nani and Anderson will not have to be paid until they have made many appearances, and United are arguably still underspending since home games regularly attract 76,000 fans.

Hicks and Gillett are not spending at Liverpool but instead guaranteeing borrowings by the club, for players and for the stadium. How Thaksin or West Ham's owners are financing their clubs' expenditure will be revealed only in the accounts.

The example has been set at Chelsea. Roman Abramovich transported the club from financial difficulties in 2003 to Premier League champions in 2005 and 2006 with £450m from his unholy fortune, but even the oligarch has done it with loans. In those title-winning seasons, Chelsea made losses of £140m and £80m respectively. Without Abramovich's continuing support, Chelsea, spending way beyond their real income, would be bust tomorrow. We are told that the other clubs have it under control, that the expenditure that, despite the new TV millions, seems so excessive, is in fact within their means. However, as with Leeds, if it is not, we will not know until it is too late. ●

"The recent Premier League takeovers have sparked a vague notion among fans that a new generation of benefactors is spending millions, but that does not reflect reality"

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

28 MILAN

£18.72m

The European champions spent a reported £15.2m on Alexandre Pato from Internacional and £3.3m on Emerson from Real Madrid.

‹ Emerson

29 CHELSEA

£17.7m

Florent Malouda (£13.7m, Lyon) and Juliano Belletti (£4m, Barcelona) were the Blues' main deals.

‹ Malouda

30 NAPOLI

£17.1m

The newly-promoted club brought in a number of players, including Ezequiel Lavezzi (£4.2m, San Lorenzo), Marek Hamsik (£3.8m, Brescia), Walter Gargano (£2.4m, Danubio) and Matteo Contini (£2.2m, Parma). Napoli also signed Marcelo Zalayeta and Manuele Blasi from Juventus in a co-ownership deal.

‹ Lavezzi

SPAIN

EURO SQUADS 2007-08

ALMERIA

GOALKEEPERS		
13	David COBENO	06.04.82
1	DIEGO Alves Carreira (Bra)	24.06.85
DEFENDERS		
18	Wilmer Santiago ACASIETE (Per)	22.11.77
3	AITOR Lopez Rekarte	18.08.75
2	BRUNO Saltor	01.10.80
21	CARLOS GARCIA Badias	29.04.84
11	DOMINGO Cisma	09.02.82
24	JUANITO	17.02.80
22	MANE	21.12.81
14	Ruben Martin PULIDO	02.02.79
MIDFIELDERS		
6	Jose Luis CABRERA	10.05.82
15	CORONA	12.02.81
8	Albert CRUSAT	13.05.82
16	Julio DOS SANTOS (Bra)	05.05.83
4	FELIPE MELO de Carvalho (Bra)	26.08.83
10	Jose ORTIZ Bernal	04.08.77
17	Juan Manuel ORTIZ	01.03.82
23	Fernando SORIANO	24.09.79
5	Kalu UCHE (Nig)	15.11.82
FORWARDS		
19	NATALIO Lorenzo	18.09.84
9	Alvaro NEGREDO	20.08.85
20	Mathias VIDANGOSSY (Chi)	25.05.87
COACH		
UNAI EMERY		06.11.71

ATHLETIC BILBAO

GOALKEEPERS		
13	Daniel ARANZURIA	18.09.79
1	Gorka IRAIZOZ	06.03.81
DEFENDERS		
20	AITOR OCIO	28.11.76
5	Fernando AMOREBIETA	21.03.83
21	David CUELLAR	01.11.79
3	Asier DEL HORNO	19.01.81
2	Unai EXPOSITO	23.01.80
15	Andoni IRAOLA	22.06.82
12	KONKU	23.12.80
19	Ander MURILLO	22.07.83
14	Luis PRIETO	19.02.79
4	USTARITZ	16.02.83
6	Iban ZUBIAURRE	22.01.83
MIDFIELDERS		
25	DAVID LOPEZ	10.09.82
11	Igor GABILONDO	10.02.79
18	Carlos GURPEGI	19.08.80
24	JAVI MARTINEZ Aguinaga	02.09.88
22	Inaki MUNOZ	02.07.78
16	Pablo ORBAIZ	06.02.79
27	Markel SUSAETA	14.12.87
7	TIKO	15.09.76
10	Francisco YESTE	06.12.79
FORWARDS		
23	Aritz ADURIZ	11.02.81
17	Joseba ETXEBERRIA	05.09.77
9	Fernando LLORENTE	26.02.85
28	Ion VELEZ	17.02.85
COACH		
Joaquin CAPARROS		13.10.55

ATLETICO MADRID

GOALKEEPERS		
13	Christian ABBIATI (Ita)	08.08.77
1	Ismael Gomez FALCON	24.04.85
25	Leo FRANCO (Arg)	20.05.77
DEFENDERS		
3	ANTONIO LOPEZ Guerrero	13.09.81
12	Fabiano ELLER (Bra)	19.11.77
22	PABLO Ibanez	03.08.81
21	Luis PEREA (Col)	30.01.79
4	Mariano PERNIA	04.05.77
2	Georgios SEITARIDIS (Gre)	04.06.81
14	ZE CASTRO (Por)	13.01.83
MIDFIELDERS		
6	CLEBER SANTANA Loureiro (Bra)	27.06.81
15	Jose Manuel JURADO	29.06.86
9	LUIS GARCIA Sanz	24.06.78
18	MANICHE (Por)	11.11.77
5	Thiago MOTTA	28.08.82
8	RAUL GARCIA Escudero	11.07.86
17	Jose Antonio REYES	01.09.83
11	Maxi RODRIGUEZ (Arg)	02.01.81
24	SIMAO Sabrosa (Por)	31.10.79
23	Juan VALERA	21.12.84
FORWARDS		
10	Sergio AGUERO (Arg)	02.06.88
7	Diego FORLAN (Uru)	19.05.79
20	MISTA	12.11.78
COACH		
Javier AGUIRRE (Mex)		01.12.58

BARCELONA

GOALKEEPERS		
25	Albert JORQUERA	03.03.79
1	Victor VALDES	14.01.82
DEFENDERS		
22	Eric ABIDAL (Fra)	11.09.79
4	Rafael MARQUEZ (Mex)	13.02.79
3	Gabriel MILITO (Arg)	07.09.80
23	OLEGUER Presas	02.02.80
5	Carles PUYOL	13.04.78
16	SILVINHO (Bra)	12.04.74
21	Lilian THURAM (Fra)	01.01.72
11	Gianluca ZAMBROTTA (Ita)	10.02.77
MIDFIELDERS		
20	DECO (Por)	27.08.77
15	EDMILSON (Bra)	10.07.76
8	Andres INIESTA	11.05.84
24	Yaya TOURE (IvC)	13.05.83
6	XAVI Hernandez	25.01.80
FORWARDS		
27	BOJAN Krkic	28.08.90
9	Samuel ETO'O (Cam)	10.03.81
18	Santiago EZQUERRO	14.12.76
17	GIOVANI dos Santos (Mex)	11.05.89
7	Eidur GUDJOHNSEN (Ice)	15.09.78
14	Thierry HENRY (Fra)	17.08.77
19	Lionel MESSI (Arg)	24.06.87
10	RONALDINHO (Bra)	21.03.80
COACH		
Frank RIJKAARD (Hol)		30.09.62

BETIS

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Antonio DOBLAS	06.08.80
13	RICARDO (Por)	11.02.76
DEFENDERS		
7	Juan Pablo CAFFA (Arg)	30.09.84
12	DAMIA Abella	15.04.82
3	FERNANDO VEGA	03.07.84
6	Branco ILIC (Sln)	06.02.83
4	Juan Gutierrez JUANITO	23.07.76
22	William LIMA (Bra)	10.02.85
2	MELLI	06.06.84
15	Victoriano Rivas NANO	07.07.80
5	David RIVAS	02.12.78
MIDFIELDERS		
8	Arturo Garcia ARZU	17.03.81
17	Marko BABIC (Cro)	28.01.81
14	CAPI	26.03.77
9	FERNANDO Fernandez	02.06.79
11	Mark GONZALEZ (Chi)	10.07.84
27	JUANDE	12.06.86
23	David ODONNOR (Ger)	21.02.84
18	Alberto RIVERA	19.02.78
20	Leandro Daniel SOMOZA (Uru)	26.01.81
FORWARDS		
10	EDU (Bra)	10.05.76
24	JOSE MARI	10.12.78
16	Mariano PAVONE (Arg)	27.05.82
25	Rafael SOBIS (Bra)	17.06.85
19	XISCO	05.09.80
COACH		
Hector CUPER (Arg)		16.11.55

DEPORTIVO LA CORUNA

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Dudu AVAT (Isr)	17.10.77
13	Gustavo MUNUA (Uru)	27.01.78
DEFENDERS		
25	AYTHAMI Artiles Oliva	02.04.86
19	Antonio BARRAGAN	12.06.87
5	Fabricio COLOCCINI (Arg)	22.01.82
3	FILIPE (Bra)	09.08.85
4	Alberto LOPO	05.05.80
2	MANUEL PABLO Garcia	25.01.76
24	PABLO AMO	15.01.78
MIDFIELDERS		
6	Julian DE GUZMAN (Can)	25.03.81
18	Jose Andres GUARDADO (Mex)	28.09.86
28	JAIRO Alvarez	21.03.86
22	JUAN RODRIGUEZ	01.04.82
17	Angel LAFITA	07.08.84
14	PABLO ALVAREZ Nunez	14.05.80
8	SERGIO Gonzalez	10.11.76
21	Juan Carlos VALERON	17.06.75
10	Juan VERDU	05.05.83
FORWARDS		
12	ADRIAN Lopez	08.01.88
7	Rodolfo BODIPO	25.10.77
20	CRISTIAN Hidalgo	21.09.83
11	RIKI	11.08.80
15	RUBEN Castro	27.06.81
9	Sebastian TABORDA (Uru)	22.05.81
23	XISCO	26.06.86
COACH		
Miguel Angel LOTINA		18.06.57

ESPANYOL

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Carlos KAMENI (Cam)	18.02.84
13	Inaki LAFUENTE	24.01.76
DEFENDERS		
2	Francisco Javier CHICA	17.05.85
3	DAVID GARCIA de la Cruz	16.01.81
21	Daniel JARQUE	01.01.83
4	Jesus Maria LACRUZ	25.04.78
22	MOISES Hurtado	20.02.81
6	Clemente RODRIGUEZ (Arg)	31.07.81
27	Albert SERRAN	17.07.84
19	Marc TORREJON	18.02.86
MIDFIELDERS		
14	ANGEL Martinez Cervera	31.01.86
9	Ivan DE LA PENA	06.05.76
15	FREDSON (Bra)	22.02.81
16	JONATAS Domingos	29.07.82
11	Albert RIERA	15.04.82
18	RUFETE	20.11.76
25	Milan SMILJANIC (Ser)	19.11.86
17	Mohamed YIACOUBI (Mor)	12.09.77
8	Pablo ZABALETA (Uru)	16.01.85
FORWARDS		
20	CORO	05.01.83
24	JONATHAN Soriano	24.09.85
10	LUIS GARCIA Fernandez	06.02.81
23	Raul TAMUDO	19.10.77
7	VALDO	23.04.81
COACH		
Ernesto VALVERDE		04.02.64

GETAFE

GOALKEEPERS		
13	Roberto ABBONDANZIERI (Arg)	19.08.72
1	Oscar USTARI (Arg)	03.07.86
DEFENDERS		
4	David BELENGUER	17.12.72
2	Cosmin CONTRA (Rom)	15.12.75
21	David CORTES	29.08.79
3	Daniel Alberto DIAZ (Arg)	13.03.79
12	Lucas Matias LICHT (Arg)	06.04.81
5	Pedro MARIO	02.02.82
19	Franck SIGNORINO (Fra)	19.09.81
23	Manuel TENA	03.02.78
MIDFIELDERS		
8	ALBERTO Aguilar	12.07.84
16	Juan Angel ALBIN (Uru)	17.07.86
22	Francisco Javier CASQUERO	11.03.76
6	Fabio CELESTINI (Swi)	31.10.75
10	Ruben DE LA RED	05.06.85
25	Esteban GRANERO	02.07.87
7	MARIO COTELO	10.02.75
15	NACHO	24.06.80
24	PABLO HERNANDEZ	11.04.85
20	Miguel PALLARDO	05.09.86
11	Francisco David SOUSA	03.02.80
FORWARDS		
9	BRAULIO Nobrega	18.09.85
17	KEPA Blanco	13.01.84
14	MANU	25.02.84
18	Ikechukwu UCHE (Nig)	05.01.84
COACH		
Michael LAUDRUP (Den)		15.06.64

LEVANTE

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Vladan KEKOVIC (Ser)	23.08.78
13	Marco STORARI (Ita)	07.01.77
DEFENDERS		
4	ALVARO (Bra)	29.04.79
5	Bruno CIRILLO (Ita)	21.03.77
3	DAVID Castedo	29.01.74
23	Inaki DESCARGA	25.08.76
2	MANUEL GASPAR Haro	03.02.81
24	Miguel ROBUSTE	20.05.85
17	Luis Manuel RUBIALES	23.08.77
18	Jose Manuel SERRANO	17.03.81
MIDFIELDERS		
12	Mathieu BERSON (Fra)	23.02.80
21	Laurent COURTOIS (Fra)	11.09.78
7	Felix ETTIEN (IvC)	26.09.79
6	JAVI FUEGO	04.01.84
22	JUANMA	29.05.81
14	PEDRO LEON Sanchez	24.11.86
10	Mustapha RIGA (Ind)	10.10.81
11	SAVIO (Bra)	09.01.74
15	Dominico TOMMASI (Ita)	17.05.74
8	Emilio Jose VIQUEIRA	20.09.74
FORWARDS		
9	Shota ARVELADZE (Geo)	22.02.73
19	Alexandre GEIJO (Swi)	11.03.82
20	Cristian RIGANO (Ita)	25.05.74
COACH		
Abel RESINO		02.02.60

MALLORCA

GOALKEEPERS		
25	German LUX (Arg)	07.06.82
1	Miguel Angel MOYA	02.04.84
DEFENDERS		
22	Sergio BALLESTEROS	04.09.75
17	DAVID NAVARRO Pedros	25.05.80
21	Javier DORADO	17.02.77
3	FERNANDO NAVARRO	25.06.82
24	HECTOR Berenguel	11.10.74
15	Francisco MOLINERO	26.07.85
16	NUNES (Por)	07.03.77
2	Ivan RAMIS	25.10.84
7	Fernando VARELA	01.09.79
MIDFIELDERS		
18	Juan Fernando ARANGO (Ven)	15.05.80
6	Angelos BASINAS (Gre)	03.01.76
12	Gonzalo CASTRO (Uru)	14.09.84
23	Jonas Manuel GUTIERREZ (Arg)	05.07.82
10	Ariel IBAGAZA (Arg)	27.01.76
4	Guillermo Ariel PEREYRA (Arg)	20.02.80
11	TUNI	14.06.82
8	Borja VALERO	12.01.85
FORWARDS		
14	Daniel GUIZA	17.08.80
20	Oscar TREJO (Arg)	26.04.86
19	VICTOR Casadesus	28.02.85
9	Pierre WEBO (Cam)	20.01.82
COACH		
Gregorio MANZANO		05.08.56

EURO SQUADS 2007-08

MURCIA

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Fabian CARINI (Uru)	26.12.79
13	Antonio NOTARIO	19.11.72
DEFENDERS		
5	Cesar ARZO	21.01.83
21	Iban Javier CUADRADO	21.02.79
23	CURRO TORRES Ruiz	27.12.76
3	Alejandro MARANON	15.05.80
14	Alvaro MEJIA	18.01.82
4	Juan Cruz OCHOA	04.03.79
16	Francisco PENA	25.07.78
2	Stephane PIGNOL (Fra)	03.01.77
MIDFIELDERS		
10	ABEL Gomez	20.02.82
6	BRUNO Hierro	13.02.85
9	Enrique DE LUCAS	17.08.78
17	Francisco GALLARDO	13.01.80
15	Pablo GARCIA (Uru)	15.05.77
11	JOFRE Mateu	24.01.80
25	Jose Maria MOVILLA	08.02.75
8	Mario REGUEIRO (Uru)	14.09.78
20	RICHI	14.04.77
FORWARDS		
18	BAIANO (Bra)	18.03.79
7	Henok GOITOM (Swe)	16.09.84
22	INIGO Velez	15.03.82
19	IVAN Daniel ALONSO (Uru)	10.04.79
COACH		
Luca ALCARAZ		21.06.66

OSASUNA

GOALKEEPERS		
26	ANDRES FERNANDEZ Moreno	17.12.86
1	Juan ELIA	24.10.79
13	RICARDO Lopez	31.12.71
DEFENDERS		
19	Enrique CORRALES	01.03.82
7	Cesar CRUCHAGA	26.01.74
15	IGOTZ GARDE Gomez	31.10.81
2	Jose IZQUIERDO	03.08.80
17	JAVIER FLANO Beznarten	19.08.84
14	JOSETXO	25.02.77
4	MIGUEL FLANO Beznarten	19.08.84
3	Nacho MONREAL	26.02.86
MIDFIELDERS		
40	Cesar AZPILICUETA	28.08.89
23	Ludovic DELPORTE (Fra)	06.02.80
24	Joe ERICE	03.11.86
8	HECTOR FONT	15.06.84
20	HUGO VIANA (Por)	15.01.83
16	JAVI GARCIA	08.02.87
12	JUANFRAN	02.01.85
5	Xavier MARGARAZ (Swi)	07.01.84
	Javad NEKOUNAM (Iru)	07.09.80
6	Jaroslav PLASIL (Cze)	05.01.82
10	Pabi PUNAL	06.09.75
FORWARDS		
18	DADY (Por)	13.08.81
11	Walter PANDIANI (Uru)	27.04.76
9	Javier PORTILLO	30.03.82
22	Enrique SOLA	25.02.86
21	Carlos VELA (Mex)	01.03.89
COACH		
Coco ZIGANDA		01.10.66

RACING SANTANDER

GOALKEEPERS		
25	Juan CALATAYUD	21.12.79
1	Fabio COUTORTI (Swi)	03.12.80
13	TONO	17.12.79
DEFENDERS		
21	AYOZE Diaz	25.05.82
24	CESAR NAVAS	14.02.80
5	CHRISTIAN FERNANDEZ	15.10.85
4	Ezequiel CARAY (Arg)	10.10.86
17	LUIS FERNANDEZ Gutierrez	27.06.72
22	Jose MORATON	14.07.79
3	ORIOL Lozano	23.05.81
14	Pablo PINILLOS	09.07.74
2	SAMUEL San Jose	01.03.84
16	SERGIO SANCHEZ Ortega	03.04.86
MIDFIELDERS		
8	Gonzalo COLSA	05.04.79
6	Aldo DUSCHER (Arg)	22.03.79
23	JONATHAN VALLE	30.12.87
7	JORDI LOPEZ Montana	28.02.81
18	JORGE LOPEZ Felpeto	19.09.78
26	LUISMA	11.08.89
19	Cristian PORTILLA	28.08.88
11	Oscar SERRANO	30.09.81
20	Danny SZETELA (USA)	07.06.87
FORWARDS		
32	IVAN BOLADO	03.07.89
10	Pedro MUNITIS	19.06.75
12	Ebi SMOLAREK (Pol)	09.01.81
9	Mohammed TCHITE (Con)	03.01.84
COACH		
MARCELINO		14.08.65

REAL MADRID

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Iker CASILLAS	20.05.81
13	Jordi CODINA	27.04.82
25	Jerzy DUDEK (Pol)	23.03.73
DEFENDERS		
5	Fabio CANNAVARO (Ita)	13.09.73
15	Royston DRENTHE (Hol)	08.04.87
16	Gabriel HEINZE (Arg)	19.03.78
12	MARCELO (Bra)	12.05.88
21	Christoph METZELDER (Ger)	05.11.80
2	MICHEL SALGADO	22.10.75
3	PEPE (Por)	26.02.83
4	SERGIO RAMOS Garcia	30.03.86
22	Miguel TORRES	28.01.86
MIDFIELDERS		
24	Javier BALBOA	13.05.85
6	Mahamadou DIARRA (Mli)	18.05.81
8	Fernando GAGO (Arg)	10.04.86
14	GUTI	31.10.76
19	JULIO BAPTISTA (Bra)	01.10.81
11	Arjen ROBBEN (Hol)	23.01.84
23	Wesley SNEIDER (Hol)	09.06.84
FORWARDS		
20	Gonzalo HIGUAIN (Arg/Fra)	10.12.87
7	RAUL Gonzalez	27.06.77
10	ROBINHO (Bra)	25.01.84
18	Javier SAVIOLA (Arg)	11.12.81
9	Roberto SOLDADO	27.05.85
17	Ruud VAN NISTELROOY (Hol)	01.07.76
COACH		
Bernd SCHUSTER (Ger)		22.11.59

RECREATIVO

GOALKEEPERS		
25	Mariano Damian BARBOSA	27.07.84
13	Jose Antonio LUQUE	16.02.74
1	Stefano SORRENTINO (Ita)	28.03.79
DEFENDERS		
22	BETO (Por)	03.05.76
3	DANI BAUTISTA	25.02.84
2	EDU MOYA	18.08.82
5	IAGO BOUZON	17.03.83
4	Jose MARTIN CACERES (Uru)	03.03.88
24	Jose Maria "PAMPA" CALVO (Arg)	15.07.81
20	POLI	20.03.77
16	QUIQUE ALVAREZ Sanjuan	20.07.75
MIDFIELDERS		
21	AITOR Tornavaca	24.03.76
17	Rafael BARBER	02.10.80
12	CARLOS MARTINS (Por)	29.04.82
6	GERARD Lopez	12.03.79
10	JESUS VAZQUEZ Munoz	18.07.80
7	MARQUITOS	21.03.87
19	Silvestre VARELA (Por)	02.02.85
15	Jose Ignacio ZAHINOS	01.12.77
FORWARDS		
8	Javier CAMUNAS	17.07.80
9	ERSEN Martin (Tur)	05.03.79
11	Dumitru ROSU (Rom)	26.10.75
14	Florent SINAMA-PONGOLLE (Fra)	20.10.84
COACH		
Victor MUNOZ		15.03.57

SEVILLA

GOALKEEPERS		
13	Morgan DE SANCTIS (Ita)	26.03.77
1	Andres PALOP	22.10.73
DEFENDERS		
23	Khalid BOULAHROUZ (Hol)	28.12.81
4	DANIEL ALVES (Bra)	06.05.83
3	Ivica DRAGUTINOVIC (Ser)	13.11.75
14	Julien ESCUDE (Fra)	17.08.79
28	Federico FAZIO (Arg)	17.03.87
24	Andreas HINKEL (Ger)	26.03.82
2	JAVI NAVARRO	06.02.74
15	Aquivaldo MOSQUERA (Col)	22.06.81
MIDFIELDERS		
6	ADRIANO Correia (Bra)	26.10.84
27	Alejandro ALFARO	23.01.86
17	Diego CAPEL	16.02.88
20	Tom DE MUL (Bel)	04.03.86
5	DUDA (Por)	27.06.80
7	JESUS NAVAS Gonzalez	21.11.85
21	Seydou KEITA (Mli)	16.06.80
25	Enzo MARESCA (Ita)	10.02.80
18	Jose Luis MARTI	28.04.75
8	Christian POULSEN (Den)	28.02.80
11	RENATO (Bra)	15.05.79
FORWARDS		
12	Frederic KANOUTE (Mli)	02.09.77
9	Alexander KERZHAKOV (Rus)	27.11.82
22	Aroona KONE (IvC)	11.11.83
10	LUIS FABIANO (Bra)	08.11.80
COACH		
Juande RAMOS		25.09.54

VALENCIA

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Santiago CANIZARES	18.12.69
13	Timo HILDEBRAND (Ger)	05.04.79
25	Juan Luis MORA	12.07.73
DEFENDERS		
4	Raul ALBIOL	04.09.85
20	ALEXIS Ruano	04.08.85
12	Marco CANEIRA (Por)	09.02.79
15	IVAN HELGUERA	28.03.75
5	Carlos MARCHENA	31.07.79
23	Luis MIGUEL (Por)	04.01.80
24	Emiliano MORETTI (Ita)	11.06.81
MIDFIELDERS		
6	David ALBELDA	01.09.77
8	Ruben BARAJA	11.07.75
22	EDU (Bra)	15.05.78
11	Jaime GAVILAN	12.05.85
17	JOAQUIN Sanchez	21.07.81
3	MANUEL FERNANDES (Por)	05.02.86
21	David SILVA	08.01.86
2	Sunday Stephen, "SUNNY"	17.09.88
14	VICENTE Rodriguez	16.07.81
FORWARDS		
10	Miguel Angel ANGULO	23.06.77
19	Angel Javier ARIZMENDI	03.03.84
16	Juan Manuel MATA	28.04.88
9	Fernando MORIENTES	05.04.76
7	David VILLA	03.12.81
18	Nikola ZIGIC (Ser)	25.09.80
COACH		
Quique SANCHEZ FLORES		05.02.65

VALLADOLID

GOALKEEPERS		
13	ALBERTO Lopez	20.05.69
1	Ludovic BUTELLE (Fra)	01.04.83
DEFENDERS		
4	ALEXIS	06.03.84
2	Daniel CIFUENTES	13.07.80
5	Jose Antonio GARCIA CALVO	01.04.75
24	INAKI BEA Jauregi	27.06.78
8	JAVIER BARAJA Vegas	24.08.80
3	Alberto MARCOS	15.02.74
10	OSCAR SANCHEZ Fuentes	19.12.79
16	PEDRO LOPEZ Munoz	01.01.83
15	RAFA	09.04.85
MIDFIELDERS		
23	ALVARO ANTON Camarero	28.12.83
18	ALVARO RUBIO Robles	18.04.79
6	BORJA Fernandez	01.04.82
17	Diego CAMACHO	03.10.76
11	Jose Luis CAPDEVILA	12.02.81
22	Fabian ESTOYANOFF (Uru)	27.09.82
14	Daniel NGOM KOME (Cam)	13.09.74
19	Jonathan SESMA	14.11.78
7	SISI	22.04.86
20	Angel Manuel VIVAR DORADO	12.02.74
FORWARDS		
27	KIKE	12.01.88
9	Joseba LLORENTE	24.11.79
12	Bartholomew OGBECHE (Nig)	01.10.84
21	VICTOR Manuel	17.04.74
COACH		
MENDILIBAR		14.03.61

VILLARREAL

GOALKEEPERS		
13	DIEGO Lopez	03.11.81
1	Sebastian VIERA (Uru)	07.03.83
DEFENDERS		
5	Joan CAPDEVILA	03.02.78
12	Pascal CYGAN (Fra)	29.04.74
20	Fabricio FUENTES (Arg)	13.10.76
4	Diego GODIN (Uru)	16.02.86
17	JAVI VENTA	13.12.75
3	JOSEMI	15.11.79
2	Gonzalo Javier RODRIGUEZ (Arg)	10.04.84
MIDFIELDERS		
21	BRUNO Soriano	12.06.84
10	CANI	03.08.81
8	Santiago CAZORLA	13.12.84
14	Matias FERNANDEZ (Chl)	15.05.86
6	JOSICO	06.01.75
24	Rio MAVUBA (Fra)	08.03.84
7	Robert PIRES (Fra)	29.10.73
16	Juan Roman RIQUELME (Arg)	24.06.78
19	Marcos SENNA	17.07.76
FORWARDS		
9	Guillermo FRANCO	03.11.76
15	NIHAT Kahveci (Tur)	23.11.79
22	Giuseppe ROSSI (Ita)	01.02.87
11	Jon Dahl TOMASSON (Den)	29.08.76
COACH		
Manuel PELLEGRINI (Chl)		16.09.53

ZARAGOZA

GOALKEEPERS		
1	CESAR Sanchez	02.09.81
25	Javier LOPEZ VALLEJO	29.09.75
13	MIGUEL Martinez	25.11.81
DEFENDERS		
6	Roberto AYALA (Arg)	14.04.73
24	CHUS HERRERO	10.02.84
4	Luis Carlos CUARTERO	17.08.75
2	Carlos DIOGO (Uru)	18.07.83
11	JUANFRAN	15.07.76
3	Javier PAREDES	05.07.82
15	Francisco PAVON	09.01.80
23	SERGIO Fernandez	23.05.77
MIDFIELDERS		
8	Pablo AIMAR (Arg)	03.11.79
16	Albert CELADES	29.09.75
10	Andres D'ALESSANDRO (Arg)	15.04.81
14	GABI	10.07.83
19	David GENERELO	11.08.82
7	Peter LUCCIN (Fra)	09.04.79
20	MATUZALEM (Bra)	10.06.80
5	OSCAR Gonzalez	12.11.82
21	Alberto ZAPATER	13.06.85
FORWARDS		
22	Diego MILITO (Arg)	12.06.79
12	RICARDO OLIVEIRA (Bra)	05.06.80
9	SERGIO GARCIA	09.06.83
COACH		
Victor FERNANDEZ		28.11.60

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SWEDEN

Lars feels the heat

The Swedish press have criticised national coach Lagerback despite the side being on course to qualify for yet another major finals. Nick Bidwell reports

OVER THE PAST 25 years Sweden have been led by some fine coaches, notably Georg Ericson and Tommy Svensson, the latter taking them to third place at USA 94. However, none has proved so consistently successful as current boss Lars Lagerback. In tandem with Tommy Soderberg from 2000 to 2004 and then in sole charge, he has steered the Swedes to four major finals in a row and has a good chance of making it five with Euro 2008. Indeed, of all Sweden's managers, Lagerback is arguably only trumped by George Raynor, the Yorkshireman who guided the country to Olympic gold in 1948 and runners-up spot at the 1958 World Cup.

Yet for all his achievements, Lagerback finds himself unloved by large sections of the Swedish media and fans. Detractors concede Lagerback's obsession with the functional is a handy tool for qualification, but argue that a starring role at a major finals requires much more than meticulous organisation and a coach fascinated by the minutiae of the game.

Last year's World Cup provided the anti-Lagerback camp with all the ammunition they needed. His unadventurous strategy and loyalty to players who clearly were not up to the task (Teddy Lucic and Mattias Jonson were two notables) was evident in the goalless draw with Trinidad & Tobago, the fortunate 1-0 win against Paraguay and the 2-0 second-round capitulation to Germany.

Nap hand...Allback (centre) gets the plaudits from Rosenberg and Wilhelmsson after scoring in the 5-0 rout of Iceland

> "No one expected the coach to change his unadventurous strategy, and he has not"

Witch hunt

With the media witch-hunt in full flow last summer and fans hanging a banner outside his house telling him to resign, Lagerback's days looked numbered. Yet both he and federation president Lars Ake Lagrell stood firm. Lagrell said expectations were too high; Lagerback insisted he would not walk away before his contract expired in 2008, then hinted he might sign up for even longer.

No one expected him to change his ways after the World Cup, and he has not. Tactical discipline, teamwork and sheer efficiency were again the outstanding attributes as Sweden amassed 19 points from their first eight Euro 2008 qualifiers. The line-up has barely changed – nine of the team that sunk without trace against Germany played in the 5-0 Euro 2008 win over Iceland in June. Prospects such as Malmo midfielder Ola Toivonen and Groningen striker Marcus Berg may have to wait before breaking through.

What has changed, though, is the huge pressure Lagerback now has to live with, exacerbated by off-field problems. Was he looking to reassert his authority when he sent home Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Olof Mellberg and Christian Wilhelmsson for breaking a curfew before a qualifier against Liechtenstein in September last year? Whatever, Ibrahimovic was unimpressed and turned his back on the team, only returning to the fold in March.

A peace treaty was the only way to go. For all Ibrahimovic's egocentric behaviour, his goals and flair are vital to the Swedish cause. So too are central midfielder Kim Kallstrom and attacker Johan Elmander, both of whom have made considerable strides in France with Lyon and Toulouse respectively.

There are two issues Lagerback must swiftly address. The first concerns Freddie Ljungberg, increasingly injury-prone and clearly not as dynamic as he used to be. Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger saw Ljungberg was in decline and acted this summer by selling him to West Ham.

Then there is the creaky, lumbering defence. Lagerback must have been chilled to the core by the ease with which Denmark fought back to draw level from 3-0 down in a Euro 2008 qualifier in Copenhagen in June. Ultimately, the Swedes got out of jail, handed the win after the match was abandoned in the 89th minute when a Danish fan attacked referee Herbert Fandel for awarding Sweden a penalty. But team and coach are unlikely to dodge the bullet in the future.

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Maverick...Ibrahimovic's skills are matched by a combustible temperament

THE COACH

Lars Lagerback

An extremely reserved character whose forte is his methodical analysis of opponents. The 59-year-old is renowned for being pragmatic, resilient and stubborn. Critics say his teams are boring but he ploughs his own furrow regardless. Lagerback, a political science graduate, enjoyed only a modest playing career and then took charge of lower league sides Kilafors, Arbra and Hudiksvalls. He joined the Swedish federation in 1990 as a youth team coach, working his way through the ranks before becoming an assistant to national coach Tommy Soderberg in 1998. Two years later the pair became a double act, and when Soderberg stepped down after Euro 2004, Lagerback continued alone.

Pragmatist...Lagerback

KEY PLAYERS

Zlatan Ibrahimovic

This highly-gifted striker hardly displays characteristic Scandinavian traits. The son of Bosnian-Croat parents has skills and a combustible temperament that are essentially Latin, and it makes total sense that he has been impressing in the Italian League for the past three seasons, first at Juventus, now Internazionale. The complete attacking package but infuriatingly prone to doing a disappearing act.

Kim Kallstrom

Extremely versatile midfielder who is equally sound in the centre or on the left. Kallstrom offers a good mixture of the physically imposing and the technical, and also has become much more consistent since joining French champions Lyon from Rennes a year ago. The downside is his lack of pace.

Versatile...Kallstrom

Tobias Linderoth

The contribution of this defensive midfielder is not always appreciated in Sweden, but his detractors should look more closely. Linderoth, the son of former Swedish international midfielder Anders Linderoth, gets through the work of three men, reads the game expertly, uses the ball well and takes a good set-piece. He recently left FC Copenhagen for Galatasaray. ●

Fitness...Linderoth

SQUAD

	CLUB	DOB	CAPS	GOALS
GOALKEEPERS				
Andreas ISAKSSON	Manchester City (Eng)	03.10.81	48	0
Rami SHAABAN	Fredrikstad (Nor)	30.06.75	13	0
Johan WILAND	Elfsborg	24.01.81	2	0
DEFENDERS				
Matias CONCHA	Bochum (Ger)	31.03.80	6	0
Mikael DORSIN	Rosenborg (Nor)	06.10.81	14	0
Erik EDMAN	Rennes (Fra)	11.11.78	51	1
Petter HANSSON	Rennes (Fra)	14.12.76	27	1
Markus JONSSON	AIK Stockholm	09.03.81	3	0
Daniel MAJSTOROVIC	Basle (Swi)	05.04.77	10	1
Olof MELLBERG	Aston Villa (Eng)	03.09.77	76	3
Mikael NILSSON	Panathinaikos (Gre)	24.06.78	40	3
Per NILSSON	Odd Grenland (Nor)	15.09.82	5	0
Max VON SCHLEBRUGGE	Anderlecht (Blg)	01.02.77	8	0
MIDFIELDERS				
Niclas ALEXANDERSSON	IFK Gothenburg	29.12.71	103	7
Daniel ANDERSSON	Malmo	28.08.77	56	0
Kennedy BAKIRCIOGLU	Ajax (Hol)	02.11.80	11	0
Dusan DJURIC	Halmstads	16.09.84	4	0
Martin ERICSSON	Brondby (Den)	04.09.80	7	0
Stefan ISHIZAKI	Elfsborg	15.05.81	10	0
Andreas JOHANSSON	AaB Aalborg (Den)	05.07.78	14	0
Kim KALLSTROM	Lyon (Fra)	24.08.82	48	7
Tobias LINDEROTH	Galatasaray (Tur)	21.04.79	71	1
Fredrik LJUNGBERG	West Ham (Eng)	16.04.77	67	13
Anders SVENSSON	Elfsborg	17.07.76	80	14
Ola TOIVONEN	Malmo	03.07.86	2	0
Christian WILHELMSSON	Bolton (Eng)	08.12.79	44	3
FORWARDS				
Marcus ALLBACK	FC Copenhagen (Den)	05.07.73	66	29
Johan ELMANDER	Toulouse (Fra)	27.05.81	29	11
Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC	Internazionale (Ita)	03.10.81	46	18
Daniel NANNSKOG	Stabaek (Nor)	22.05.74	3	1
Rade PRICA	AaB Aalborg (Den)	30.06.80	12	2
Markus ROSENBERG	Werder Bremen (Ger)	27.09.82	17	6

Caps and goals information as at 13.09.07

Trouble brewing...Sweden line up for the controversial qualifier against Denmark in June

The country in depth – the state of the game, club-by-club guide, movers and shakers

Pitch battle

Football is finally challenging baseball as the No 1 sport in Venezuela, which hosted an ambitious Copa America this year and now has a greatly-expanded domestic league

"THIS PHRASE THAT we are a country of baseball belongs to the past," says Rafael Esquivel, president of the Venezuelan FA. "Football is already the No 1 sport in the whole country."

It may be a little early to start crowing victory, but there is no doubt that football has been hitting some staggering home runs of late.

The two out-of-the-stadium hits are the rise of the national team since the turn of the decade – from continental whipping boys to having an outside chance of World Cup qualification – and the massive investments made in order to stage this year's vastly ambitious Copa America. Three sparkling new stadiums were constructed (in Merida, Barquisimeto and Maturin), and substantial work was done on another six (Maracaibo, San Cristobal, Barinas, Caracas, Puerto La Cruz and Puerto Ordaz). It has given the country a footballing infrastructure that has permitted the first division to be expanded from 10 clubs to 18 and meant that the new season kicked off amid an unprecedented flurry of publicity.

However, there are no guarantees that such progress will be sustained. And it is also true that culture cannot be destroyed overnight.

The poor boy's vision of sport as a means of social ascension exists in Venezuela as it does throughout South America. But here the hopes are still much more likely to be deposited in baseball. The field of dreams has a pitcher's mound rather than a goal at each end. Football is more associated with the middle class.

The game in Venezuela was first played by British miners in the 1870s, but despite a flurry of activity in the 1920s soccer found it hard to grab a foothold. It was not until the early 1950s that the FA joined FIFA and the South American confederation, professionalism came into effect in 1957 and the national team played their first Copa America 10 years later.

During this time the flame was kept alive by communities of immigrants. The names of the powerful clubs in the early years of professionalism tell the story. They were all called Deportivo, but the suffix was Portugues, Italia, Espanol, Galicia or Canarias.

"I played in Venezuela, but I was the foreigner," said one of the country's best-ever players, Luis Mendoza, an attacking midfielder in the 1960s and 1970s. "The referee, my team-mates, the opponents and the crowd were all from elsewhere. It was difficult to be there, to make yourself respected and to make the breakthrough."

Rafael Santana, another of Venezuela's great names from the past, was an immigrant from the Canary Islands, while former national team striker Carlos Maldonado is originally from Uruguay, but moved north as a child.

> "The talent was always there – it just had to be freed"
>
> *National team coach Richard Paez*

With typical immigrant hard work and ambition these communities tended to belong to a higher social level than the average Venezuelan, who was happy to stick to baseball. And there was also a feeling among the immigrant communities that the real football was taking place back in Europe. It meant that the domestic game was not always taken so seriously. But on the other hand it did give local TV audiences access to the Spanish, Italian and Portuguese leagues.

Meanwhile, another dynamic was taking place. Towards the west of the country the proximity with Colombia was raising football's profile. Venezuela's most popular team are Deportivo Tachira of San Cristobal, almost on the border, and other western cities such as Merida and Maracaibo also acquired a taste for the game. Juan Arango, current idol of the Venezuelan game and a strong candidate for the title of the country's greatest ever player, is the son of Colombian parents.

What all the Venezuelan public, immigrant or otherwise, were waiting for was a triumph or two so they could identify themselves with the national team.

Suddenly, after ex-international midfielder Richard Paez took charge of the national team in 2001, there was a flurry of victories – four in a row as the 2002 World Cup qualifiers drew to a close.

Of course, the credit was not all down to Paez. Esquivel pays tribute to the youth development work carried out by Serb coaches Ratomir Dujkovic and Sreten Petkovic in the early 1990s, and also to the previous national coach, Jose Omar Pastoriza of Argentina. But there is also no doubt that the players responded to being led by a Venezuela-born coach who understood their idiosyncrasies. Especially important was the switch in approach – the team went out with the objective of winning rather than avoiding heavy defeat.

"The talent was always there," Paez says. "It just had to be freed. My big idea was to see the players with the characteristics of the typical Venezuelan, with the happiness and irreverence that keep our society going."

Those distinctive red-wine shirts – the colour of the national guard, chosen decades ago by an administrator who was a general in the institution – began to be worn with pride in the streets. For a while during the 2006 World Cup qualifiers the team looked like a vintage crop, accumulating five wins, including a stunning 3-0 triumph in Uruguay, where Brazil have never won a World Cup qualifier or Copa America match.

Venezuela have now beaten every South American country bar Brazil and Argentina. But is the Paez cycle coming to an end?

Pride and joy...Merida's Metropolitano stadium was built for the Copa America and is home to former champions Estudiantes

Venezuela fell away in the second half of the 2006 qualifiers, and although they reached the Copa quarter-finals this year, Paez admitted that the team had not dealt well with the pressure of playing in front of their own fans.

The coach had originally intended to step down after the Copa in protest at the lack of importance given to youth development work. In the end an agreement was reached and his contract extended. But he will soon find himself under pressure if a good start is not made to the 2010 World Cup qualifiers.

Shop window

At domestic level, Venezuela's expanded first division is, ironically, suffering the consequences of the national team's rise. The country's players are in the shop window as never before. Arango is with a Spanish club, Mallorca, and other national team players can now be found in Turkey, Portugal, Bulgaria, Greece, Belgium, Cyprus, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia. Indeed, only a handful are still based at home, so at the very moment that domestic football really needs idols and heroes to sustain the level of interest, they are very thin on the ground.

To fill the void, foreign players – especially high-profile Colombians – have been brought in. Former international keeper Rene Higuita was tempted out of retirement to join Guaros de Lara, current Colombia No 1 Juan Carlos Henao is at Union Atletico Maracaibo, and classy attacking midfielder Frankie Oviedo is at Tachira.

Another potential problem is that few of the first-division clubs are well-established. There has been a long tradition in the country of clubs folding or merging, changing name or city according to the whims of sponsors, politicians and investors.

Plenty of the current top 18 are new outfits in the process of building their supporter base, and even with some of the bigger clubs, the practice of giving fans free entry is widespread. Populist mayors buy up the tickets and give them away, but their short-term political gain may not be in the long-term interests of football, for what is granted for free one day can be difficult to sell the next. At the Copa, the public flocked to watch such players as Lionel Messi, Robinho, Roque Santa Cruz and Nery Castillo. In contrast, eight of the nine games in the first round of league fixtures of September attracted fewer than 5,000 fans.

It should not be taken for granted, then, that Venezuela's national side will push on and make a viable challenge for a place in South Africa in 2010, nor that the domestic league will prove attractive enough to fill the country's splendid new stadiums on a weekly basis.

The battle to establish football as Venezuela's top sport is far from over. Destiny has reserved plenty of tricky curve balls to hurl in its direction. But if it can maintain the momentum of the past few years then its players, administrators and backers will be able to smash them into the back of the net.

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

Carabobo, Llaneros, Zamora...a guide to the top-division teams

1 UNION ATLETICO MARACAIBO
Formed only in 2001 but already established as a major force. Champions in 2005 and have three Libertadores Cup appearances to their name. The squad looks strong: it includes international midfielder Miguel Mea Vitali and striker Daniel Arismendi, ex-international schemer Gabriel Urdaneta and Colombian keeper Juan Carlos Henao.

2 GUAROS DE LARA
A new club, formed in 2006 with a view to taking advantage of Barquisimeto's magnificent Metropolitano stadium, built for the Copa America but not yet quite completed. The team includes veteran Colombian keeper Rene Higuita and former Venezuelan international striker Daniel Noriega.

3 UNION LARA
Formed in 1999. They owe their place in the first division to the expansion from 10 teams to 18. Coached by Rafael Santana, one of the greats of Venezuelan football. Will share the Metropolitano stadium with Barquisimeto rivals Guaros (Lara is the name of the state).

4 CARABOBO
They won their only league title in 1971, seven years after their foundation, under the name of Valencia, their home town (Carabobo is the name of the state).

5 ARAGUA
Founded by a group of local businesspeople in 2002 and quickly won the second division title.

6 CARACAS
Founded in 1967 as an amateur team, professional since 1984 and the outstanding force in Venezuelan football over the past 15 years, winning nine league titles. Well-managed and renowned for the excellence of their youth development work. Key man is Alejandro Guerra, one of the few Venezuelan stars still playing at home.

7 DEPORTIVO ITALIA
Founded in 1949 by Italian immigrants. The club were a major force during the early years of professionalism, winning four league titles between 1961 and 1972. They then fell on hard times, were rescued by a sponsorship deal with Parmalat and won the title in 1999 (when known as ItalChacao). Hard times returned when the deal collapsed, but they are back in the first division as a result of the expansion.

8 ESTRELLA ROJA
Tiny club, formed in 2004 as a non-profit-making institution with the aim of spreading the popularity of football. They owe their first division place to the expansion and have only a small fan base.

9 ATLETICO EL VIGIA
Last season's second division winners have spent much of their 21 years of existence see-sawing between the top two levels. At the turn of the decade they even sold their right to play in the top flight to Monagas.

10 ESTUDIANTES
Formed in 1971, champions in 1980 and 1985, and Libertadores Cup quarter-finalists in 1999. The club have recently been through troubled times and spent a season in the second division.

11 TRUJILLANOS
"The mountain warriors" won their only trophy, the Venezuelan Cup, in 1992. Finished bottom of the first division last season and were saved from relegation only by the expansion.

12 ZAMORA
Stopped competing professionally in the late 1990s because of a financial crisis. In 2002 the mayor of the city of Barinas bought the franchise of Atletico Tachira of San Cristobal, moved the club to his city and Zamora were reborn.

13 LLANEROS
Tiny club with a tiny stadium who owe their place in the first division to the expansion.

14 PORTUGUESA
From Acarigua in the state of Portuguesa. The club were the dominant force in the 1970s, winning five titles, and even had Brazilian great Jairzinho on their books. Have since fallen on hard times, spending more time in the second division than the first.

15 DEPORTIVO TACHIRA
The country's most popular club were founded in the mid-1970s, have five titles to their name – the most recent in 2000 – and a record 13 Libertadores appearances. Their Pueblo Nuevo stadium is known as the temple of Venezuelan football. The team includes Colombian Frankie Oviedo and Ruberth Moran, Venezuela's all-time top scorer.

16 DEPORTIVO ANZOATEGUI
Club from the Caribbean coastal tourist town of Puerto La Cruz. They were founded only in 2002 and are debuting in the first division because of the expansion. Nevertheless, they have made an excellent start under highly-rated coach Cesar Farias.

17 MONAGAS
Founded in 1987 and have been in the first division since 1990 but were saved from relegation last term only by the expansion. Based in an area of rapid but uneven economic development, they now have the country's biggest stadium, the extraordinary 52,000-capacity Monumental.

18 MINEROS DE GUAYANA
Founded in 1981 and named after the miners who work an area rich in minerals. League champions in 1989. Their Cachamay stadium was completely and impressively remodelled for the Copa America.

The movers and shakers in Venezuelan football

● GUILLERMO VALENTINER
Veteran businessman in the pharmaceutical sector who is a long-time backer of sports and president of Caracas. His resources, commitment and administrative expertise help explain why the club have become the dominant force in domestic football.

● GIAN CARLO DI MARTINO
Mayor of Maracaibo whose drive, political strength and passion for football have helped give his city a strong claim to be the country's football capital. The oil-rich city played host to the 2005 South American Under-17 Championship and was also the main venue in the Copa America, staging five games, including the Final. Di Martino, a descendant of Italians and Argentinians, is a key backer of the Maracaibo clubs.

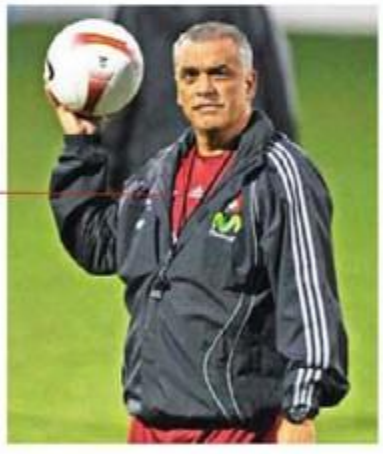
● RAFAEL ESQUIVEL
FA president since 1987. Born in Tenerife, but moved to Venezuela at the age of six. Played professionally for Union Deportivo Canarias and Deportivo Anzoategui before moving into administration. Now 61, he has presided over the extraordinary rise of the game in his adoptive country. His priority is to complete the training centre being constructed for the national team in Isla de Margerita.

● EDGARDO BRONER
Argentina-born journalist and university professor who has become one of the most respected voices in the Venezuelan game, and has chronicled its rise in measured and wise tones. Organises seminars on journalism in addition to his academic and media work.

● JUAN ARANGO
Venezuelans take pride in the deeds of their compatriots in big-time US baseball, but the rise of the Mallorca attacking midfielder has given them a footballer to follow and identify with in what they see as the world's most glamorous league. During the Copa America it seemed that the whole country was wandering around in his No 18 shirt. The hugely-talented Arango, with his booming left foot, should soon become Venezuela's all-time top scorer.

● NOEL SANVICENTE
The former international is, at 42, a leading member of a promising generation of home-grown coaches. Cut his teeth with the youth teams at Caracas and has now led the senior team to four national titles. He would seem to be the most likely successor to Paez with the national team, though he could face competition from Cesar Farias and Carlos Maldonado.

● RICHARD PAEZ
The national coach, who has led the team to unprecedented heights. Paez was a talented left-footed midfielder who needed his medical training (specialising in trauma) to cope with the bad old days. An 11-0 defeat to Argentina in the 1975 Copa America is an especially bad memory. As a coach he took Estudiantes to the quarter-finals of the 1999 Libertadores Cup. His son Ricardo is a stalwart of the national side



● EDUARDO ALVAREZ
Sports minister who was previously in charge of the National Sports Institute. In both roles he has been an important figure in the growth of football in the country. Played a key role in the organisation of the Copa America and serves as a link between the FA and state president Hugo Chavez, a baseball fan who has been bitten by the football bug.

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

Heated debate...Caracas in the Libertadores Cup

● The new 18-team top division still has opening and closing championships, as when there were only 10 teams. However, teams now play each other only once as opposed to twice in each of the championships.

● The opening championship runs from August to December; the closing championship from February to June.

● The two champions play off to decide the overall winners.

● Both champions qualify for the Libertadores Cup, along with the team with most points over the season apart from the championship winners. The next best two teams go into the Sudamericana Cup, the continent's UEFA Cup equivalent.

Ezequiel GARAY

ARGENTINA

Big future for towering centre-back

FEW SOUTH AMERICAN centre-backs can have had a more daunting international debut than that faced by Argentina's Ezequiel Garay in August. Admittedly the game against Norway was only a friendly, but the 20-year-old, whose club season with Racing Santander had not yet kicked off, still had to take on John Carew on his home patch in Oslo.

The towering centre-forward came out on top, scoring both goals in his side's 2-1 win, and Garay was not included in Argentina's squad for the September trip to Australia. But the youngster is very unlikely to end up as a one-cap wonder.

Argentina have lacked height and strength in defence of late, and Garay looks the most promising long-term solution, despite some awkward moments on his debut. At 1.89m, Garay is a full 12cm taller than long-time Argentina central defender Roberto Ayala, who retired from international football this summer.

In his very different way, Garay has it in him to become as important to his national team as Ayala was. On form, the hulking youngster can spread calm throughout the defence with his physical presence and sound technique. Also, he is a big threat at the other end – in the air but especially with his mighty right foot, with which he can strike free-kicks and penalties with terrifying force.

Garay has shown both aspects of his game to great effect with Racing Santander, whom he joined at the end of 2005 from Newell's Old Boys in his home town of Rosario. He was a giant part of Racing's success last season, when they finished 10th in La Liga, their second-best placing in the past 50 years. The defence conceded just 48 goals in 38 matches, and Garay also scored nine, seven of them from the penalty spot.

The youngster's resolve was tested in April in a league game against Real Madrid after his blunder had allowed Raul to put his side in front. Undeterred, Garay won the match by converting two late penalties.

Racing had been alerted to Garay's promise by his progress through Argentina's youth ranks. He had starred at Under-17 and Under-20 levels, but was feeling his way back from a serious ankle injury at the time of the 2005 Under-20 World Cup, and so had to settle for a reserve spot. But the suspension of first-choice Gustavo Cabral for the Final against Nigeria forced Garay into action, and he gave a typically commanding performance.

His big-match credentials were underlined in the few games he managed for Newell's before moving to Spain, including hitting the winner in a fiercely-fought derby with Rosario Central, his only goal for the club.

Although Garay is under contract until 2011, this will most probably be his final season in Santander. Major clubs have been following his progress, and the giant young defender is surely too big for an outfit that seldom fill their 22,000-capacity stadium.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Racing Santander (Spa)
Country Argentina
Born October 10, 1986, in Rosario
Previous club Newell's Old Boys
International debut August 2007, v Norway
International caps 1 (0 goals)
Honours Under-20 World Cup 2005

SWEDEN

Johan ELMANDER

Striker staying at Toulouse – for now

ROMA, TOTTENHAM, Lyon, Paris Saint-Germain, Juventus, Manchester City, West Ham...the number of big clubs linked with Toulouse striker Johan Elmander of late is impressive. But it's no surprise given the seismic impact the 26-year-old Swede has made during his 15 months in France.

Eleven goals and six assists in 33 appearances is a decent enough record but it's the way that Elmander plays that has elicited such interest. The 1.88m No 9 is physical, capable of holding his own against the most rugged defenders. He leads the line like an old-fashioned centre-forward.

He also has a particularly deft touch for a big man and scores goals that really make fans sit up and take notice. Anyone who saw his recent effort against Auxerre, which came after a run from the halfway line, will have no doubt about his finesse.

"I've grown both as a player and as a man since I've been at Toulouse," says Elmander, who joined from Brondby of Denmark in July 2006. "I've learned a hell of a lot."

But real success has been a long time coming for a player who was a boy wonder. At 18 Elmander was signed by Feyenoord from Orgryte and even appeared as a substitute in the Rotterdam side's 2002 UEFA Cup Final win against Borussia Dortmund. He also made his senior international debut that year, but still Feyenoord weren't fully convinced of his quality.

There followed loan spells at Swedish side Djurgardens and Holland's NAC Breda before a permanent move to Brondby in 2004. At last Elmander really settled at a club and netted 22 goals in 58 league games. This led to him securing a place in Sweden's World Cup squad and the move to Toulouse.

There was much talk of the forward being off to a bigger club this summer. But perhaps two indifferent performances against Liverpool in the Champions League qualifiers prompted interested parties to hold back. Elmander was fighting an uphill battle, though, as the lone striker in a side that looked to have conceded the tie before a ball had been kicked.

No matter. The talent is there. And although Elmander has a contract with Toulouse until 2010 it includes a clause that allows him to leave if there is an offer of £7.5million. Don't bet against it happening sooner rather than later.

Howard Johnson

FACT FILE

Club Toulouse (Fra)
Country Sweden
Born May 27, 1981, in Alingsas
Previous clubs Holmalunds, Orgryte, Feyenoord (Hol), Djurgardens, NAC Breda (Hol), Brondby (Den)
International debut February 2002, v Greece
International caps 29 (11 goals)
Honours UEFA Cup 2002 (Feyenoord); Swedish League 2002 (Djurgardens); Swedish Cup 2002; Danish League 2005; Danish Cup 2005

TALENT SCOUT UPDATE

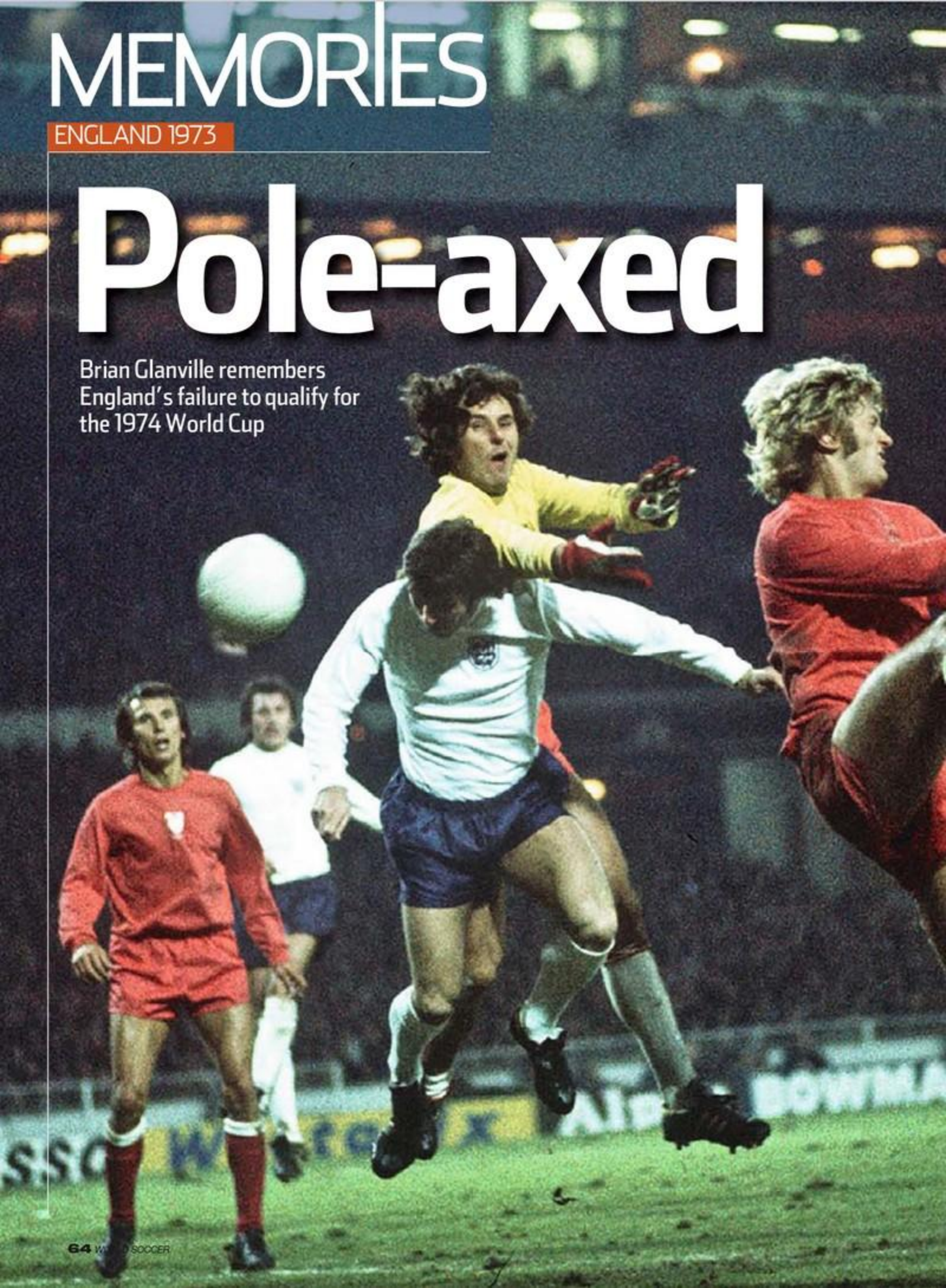
ALEX (Talent Scout, October 2003) finally completed his long-mooted move from PSV Eindhoven to Chelsea in August.

ALEX

Santos strongman set to add weight to Brazil's defence

Pole-axed

Brian Glanville remembers England's failure to qualify for the 1974 World Cup



Desperate measures...Poland's goalkeeping hero Jan Tomaszewski foils substitute Kevin Hector as England manage only a 1-1 draw at Wembley in their final qualifier for the 1974 World Cup

YOU MIGHT SAY the writing was on the wall for England and Alf Ramsey before a ball was even kicked in the 1974 World Cup qualifying tournament. It was pretty clear at the time, it is even clearer with hindsight, that somehow or other the virtue had gone out of the manager. He was making the kind of basic tactical mistakes that were bound to cost his team dearly, and he tended to compound them with a strange timidity, rather than seek to put them right with bravado.

I am referring to the two disastrous European Nations Cup quarter-final matches against West Germany in the spring of 1972. You wonder still how much difference Alan Mullery might have made, especially in the first leg at Wembley, when Gunter Netzer, largely unchallenged, bestrode the field for the Germans. For no obvious reason, Ramsey had excluded Mullery, who seemed on the face of it the perfect, firm-tackling midfielder to look after a creator such as

> **"Netzer, with his flowing blond hair, largely ran the game"**

Netzer. After all, he had already done the state some service, not least at the 1970 World Cup in Mexico, when he had played so coruscating a part in England's first goal against West Germany in Leon. But there was no place for Mullery against the Germans two years later, and in pique and frustration he announced he would never play for England again.

I well remember arriving at Wembley that evening and meeting my Italian colleagues in the press box. They were depressed by Italy's poor performance that afternoon in Belgium. I, in turn, bewailed the fact that England had picked no tackler in midfield. So it transpired that Netzer, with his big boots, his flowing blond hair and his exciting bursts, largely ran the game. The idea of playing Bobby Moore in the centre-half role he had abandoned years before proved disastrous; West Germany won 3-1.

In the return in Berlin, Ramsey's fatalism condemned England to a somewhat squalid goalless draw. Malcolm Allison, king of the maverick coaches, told me long afterwards that in the England hotel on the eve of the game he had spoken into the small hours with a troubled Ramsey about what tactics to employ. As we know, Ramsey opted for a team replete with well-known hard men that had no obvious hope of wiping out the two-goal deficit. Netzer came off the field

complaining: "The whole England team have autographed my leg."

That was the moment when the so-called, futile senior international committee should seriously have thought of replacing Ramsey, rather than giving him another two years before suddenly and almost surreptitiously discarding him, at the very time he had chosen his party for the subsequent seven internationals. The veteran Joe Mercer, once an exciting England left-half, many times a manager, cheerfully stepped in.

The 1974 World Cup qualifying group hardly looked insuperable, with the opposition being Wales and the still unregarded Poland. But the opening two matches, both against the Welsh, were a disappointment. It is true England won the dreadful game in Cardiff with a goal by the tireless Colin Bell, but one disenchanted young English manager was moved to demand: "What are they trying to do, kill off football?"

Giving Ramsey his due, he did at least hand a chance to maverick Rodney Marsh, one of the most gifted British attackers of his generation. But perhaps the chance had come too late, for Marsh was ineffective. Also, the young Kevin Keegan was some distance away from the form he was destined to show for club and country.

The return match at Wembley was disastrous for England. In a drab 1-1 draw, Bell and Alan Ball were incoherent; England's goal was scored by combative left-half Norman Hunter. The sullen English players refused to shake hands with the Welsh at the final whistle. "Very boring, very stereotyped," was the verdict on his opponents of Welsh centre-half Mike England, while his midfield colleague Terry Yorath remarked: "Once they got to our box or about 25 yards out, they had no idea. They just knocked balls into the box." But a first division English coach demanded: "How can you play football when you've got players on the field who'd kick their own grandmother?"

So near yet so far... Mick Channon (left) sees his last-gasp effort against Poland at Wembley flash narrowly wide

> **How can you play football when you've got players on the field who would kick their own grandmother?**
>
> *A first division coach gives his verdict on England's display against Wales*

It made little sense to drop the fleet right-sider Mick Channon, and it would happen expensively again the following summer for the game in Poland. In between, Channon had played in the St Valentine's Day massacre of the Scots, thrashed 5-0 in what was supposed to have been a centenary celebration.

In March 1973 Wales did England a good turn by beating the Poles 2-0 in Cardiff, but their methods were aggressive in the extreme, not least those of headbanded midfielder Trevor Hockey. However, he could play as well as kick, as he showed when winning a tackle and going on to score. "I don't approve of that fellow," Ramsey observed, "but I'm glad he was playing." Poland would take savage revenge on the Welsh the following September in Chorzow.

Non-tackling midfield

It was there that England so seriously faltered, in the June. En route, they forced a 1-1 draw in a friendly against Czechoslovakia in Prague with a last-minute goal. Surprisingly, they used a non-tackling midfield of Ball, Bell and Martin Peters. They did not impress Italy coach Enzo Bearzot, who said: "Not one of your players is a true midfield man. You badly miss Bobby Charlton. He was quality in the midst of quantity. Few players hit a long ball like he did."

Channon had had an ineffective game in Prague, but it still seemed wrong of Ramsey not merely to leave him out of the starting side in Poland but never to bring him and his right-wing pace on at all in the 2-0 defeat. Luck, however, did not favour the manager; both the Poles' goals could have been avoided. In the eighth minute, they were awarded a doubtful

THE END FOR RAMSEY

THE DRAW with Poland at Wembley was not the end for Alf Ramsey. He lingered on, only to be suddenly and callously dismissed the following April, after a rebuilt team had drawn away to Portugal. There were still seven matches, including a European tour, not to mention the home internationals, to come before the start of the European Championship qualifiers in the autumn of 1974 and Ramsey had already chosen his squad when the FA's Harold Thompson had his way and he was out. Although Ramsey had plainly shot his bolt, this was a shabby way to treat him, and his pension would be shabbier still.

free-kick on the left. An over-populated England wall caused confusion, Poland's Jan Banas made contact, the ball touched Moore and slipped past Peter Shilton.

England should have had a penalty early in the second half when Martin Chivers was plainly tripped in the box. Then one of those rare yet embarrassing mistakes by Moore put the game beyond reach. Instead of clearing the ball when Roy McFarland played it back to him, he tried to elude Wlodzimierz Lubanski, Poland's star attacker, who beat him in the tackle and ran on to score. In another challenge with Moore, Lubanski suffered such a bad injury it ended his career. Yet Poland would rise splendidly above the loss to qualify for the World Cup and excel there.

Ball rashly got himself sent off. Allan Clarke demanded, rhetorically: "The second goal was a killer, wasn't it? It sickened all the lads." And Ramsey? He said: "I was so satisfied with the first-half display that I didn't contemplate experiments."

Channon was restored to the team for a friendly in Moscow four days later and ran the Soviets ragged, only for Ramsey to substitute him and two other players when England were 2-0 up. This meant England lost the initiative though they still won, 2-1.

In another friendly, in Turin, four days after the Moscow game, Italy beat England for the first time for 40 years; the visitors did not get a single shot on goal. Italy's Fabio Capello, who would score the winner in the return friendly at Wembley in the November, observed: "Your play is too predictable. You lack a player like Bobby Charlton to switch the ball about. Regarding crosses, you take too much time to get there and make them. You miss [Terry] Cooper a lot. He was a real winger."

A 7-0 win at Wembley against a feeble Austrian team the month before the Poland return, was somewhat illusory; Clarke and Channon flourished, Chivers seemed distracted.

Series of blunders

Victory over the Poles at Wembley was imperative. But a series of blunders gave the visitors a traumatising lead. First, Tony Currie, an inside-forward deployed on the right flank, gave the ball away to left-back Adam Musial. Hunter was then beaten down the flank by the quick, clever Grzegorz Lato. When he crossed, Jan Domarski, the centre-forward, beat Shilton at his near post. The keeper would later confess his error, saying: "The shot slid under me. I didn't know whether to stop it with my hands or my legs and I did neither."

For much of the remainder of the game, England bombarded the Polish goal, to be frustrated time and again by the big, unorthodox goalkeeper, Jan Tomaszewski. Commentating on television, Brian Clough called him a clown, but this clown emphatically had the last laugh. England could well have conceded another goal when Lato, clean through, was shamelessly pulled back by McFarland. In later years, that would have meant an automatic sending off.

Ironically, this could be seen as England's best performance in the group, but, despite their increasingly desperate pressure, they managed only to find an equaliser, and that from a somewhat contentious penalty, put away by Clarke. Kevin Hector, brought on by a distracted Ramsey 90 seconds from time, struck the bar but England were out. ●

Down and out...Peter Shilton and Roy McFarland trudge off the pitch after England's World Cup exit

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

FROM THE ARCHIVES

DECEMBER 1973

Bring in Clough and Taylor

THE DUST has still to settle on England's World Cup elimination. And it is not likely to until something positive is done to map out the future of football in this country, at club as well as international level. The drab England display against Italy [in the November friendly] underlined that the game is ailing over here. Bobby Moore said that England created 15 chances but missed them all. His point was that we need better and more skilful marksmen. True. But did England really create 15 chances?

It depends on your definition of a chance. England, so lacking in ideas of how to break down a well-organised defence, may have come close a few times but only once did they genuinely carve out an opportunity. The old tactic of pumping balls into the penalty area reared its ugly head.

New players with fresh ideas are required. It would be foolish to throw out all the present incumbents. But a better balance is wanted, even at the expense of one of the Clarke-Channon-Osgood trio.

It was good to see Osgood back in the international arena but he had little chance to shine. Most of the balls he received were either waist or head-high, with an Italian defender breathing down his neck. Bell worked hard as ever but achieved little, and Currie is a disappointment. And only Ramsey knows why Peters plays in the first place.

More than new players, a new manager is essential. Ramsey should hand over gracefully now so that a new man can be brought in with time to plan the future.

Who should take over? Give the job to Brian Clough and Peter Taylor (with apologies to Brighton [their club at the time]). The Football Association can afford to pay them £30,000 a year. And it would be the first, long-overdue, positive step from Lancaster Gate.

Clough isn't the best diplomat in the world and would doubtless upset a few people along the way. England would be better off with those sorts of problems than the ones she is being suffocated by at present.

Brian Glanville's hugely entertaining and thought-provoking book *England Managers: The Toughest Job in Football* is published by Headline and priced £18.99

Platini plays the game

The UEFA president's most recent proposals for revamping the Champions League demonstrate his capacity for compromise

MICHEL PLATINI should get his Champions League revisions through the UEFA executive. After all, he has a mandate from the membership after ousting Lennart Johansson in January, and the executive is made up of national associations who want a shift in the balance of (financial) power away from the clubs.

However, it has not all been plain sailing. Platini always made it clear that one of his priorities on becoming president would be the creation of a strategic council in which all members of the football family would have a voice. He achieved that, and the council met for the first time in Monte Carlo on the eve of the European Super Cup at the end of August.

One significant snag arose. The league and club components of "his" council were not enamoured by his proposals to reorganise entry into the Champions League and put a vote on hold for a month. As Chelsea's chief executive, Peter Kenyon, put it: "The best decision we made was to delay a decision."

Platini is known to have been disappointed, on a personal level, that UEFA's executive voted against Italy and in favour of the joint bid from Poland and Ukraine as host for Euro 2012. Now he is staring another split decision in the face.

His overall strategy, to provide wider access to the Champions League group phase for the mid-ranking nations from 2009-10, should win the day but at the price of a rift with the strategic council.

This is, of course, no more than a grandiose talking shop and focus group combined. It can take its own decisions but does not decide anything for the European confederation.

Thus Platini felt empowered enough, as president, to say: "I will take my proposals to the executive committee in November whatever the council says. We have spent many months drawing up a new formula. If someone else thinks they have something better then we'll consider it. But I can tell you, it will not be easy to find."

Platini toppled Johansson precisely on the promise of greater opportunity and consideration for Europe's middle class. This has irked the league from his own country, France, for whose federation he also serves as a vice-president. Based on UEFA's current rankings, France would lose the right to send their third-placed league club into the Champions League qualifiers; instead, it would receive the far riskier option of a place earlier on in the qualifying procedure for the national cup winners.

Yet England, Spain and Italy, the three nations that had been considered most at risk from Platini's "evolution" – he rejects the term "revolution" – would emerge from the process unscathed.

A year ago, while on the presidential campaign trail, Platini had stated in no uncertain terms that the big three should have their Champions League entry cut from four clubs (two in the groups, two in the final qualifying round) to three.

Instead, Platini has agreed to a contentious compromise: the big three would now benefit from three clubs going direct into the group stage, with a place in the qualifiers retained not for the fourth-placed league club but for the national cup winners.

Platini justifies this by saying: "The English FA Cup is one of the greatest competitions and the winners deserve to be in the Champions League. I want as many winners as possible in the Champions League, rather than runners-up and third and fourth-placed clubs. We need to ensure football is more balanced so that the rich do not become even richer."

No change

However, in all the big three countries, the cup winners now almost invariably come from among the top half-dozen clubs, which means essentially that there is no change to the allocations for England, Spain and Italy.

Even worse, the present system prescribes that if the domestic cup winners qualify for the Champions League by virtue of their league position, then the losing finalists take the allocated slot in the UEFA Cup. Under Platini's proposals, the runners-up would stay out in the cold; the spare slot would go to the next highest club in the league.

Arthur Rowe, the manager who guided Tottenham to the league championship in 1951, famously said: "Football is a simple game; it's the players who make it difficult."

Balancing act...Platini believes his plans for the Champions League would help prevent the rich clubs becoming even richer

Open door...big-three clubs such as Sevilla and Arsenal would, in effect, not find qualification for the group stage any harder

Today, he might substitute the word "directors" for "players".

Platini is not only proposing a reorganisation of the Champions League but also of the UEFA Cup – and quite right too. The present secondary competition is a mixed-up nonsense whose popularity has fallen partly because it is impossible to "read" the progress of the competition as it progresses.

Entry appears to be granted to half of Europe's lucky losers, while the mini-league system is utterly banal.

Platini's plan for the UEFA Cup is a vast improvement. But, simultaneously, the Champions League is in danger of suffering from the meddling to which the secondary competition fell victim.

So what is the Platini plan for the Champions League? It would take effect from the start of the 2009-10 season, because that is when the next commercial and television deals cut in, and looks like this:

- England, Spain and Italy would have three clubs qualifying automatically for the 32-team group stage along with the champions of Europe's next 12 countries (based on the UEFA results coefficient).
- UEFA's top 16 countries would send their domestic cup winners into a two-stage qualifying competition to fill four group places.
- Six group places would be allocated to the champions of the 40 remaining (lower-ranked) leagues, who would play off in three qualifying rounds.
- The title holders would qualify for the group stage automatically.

Platini also wants the day of the Final to be changed and a higher minimum capacity for the venue. He said: "After the security problems this year in Athens I would like to see the Champions League Final played at a weekend. I was very, very disappointed that there were no children in the stadium – if it were on a Saturday [instead of a Wednesday] then children and families could come.

"I also want the Final in future to be in a big, modern stadium built specifically for football and with a capacity of about 75,000. There is always vast demand for tickets, and people come without tickets, and that creates a security problem. Of course, we cannot accommodate everyone and start building 250,000-seater stadiums. But if making more seats available through larger stadiums can help ease these security problems then it is our responsibility to do it."

> **"I want as many winners as possible in the Champions League"**
>
> *Michel Platini*

He added that he wanted 75 per cent of tickets for the Final reserved for fans.

In Platini's new UEFA Cup format, the group stage would comprise 48 clubs divided into 12 round-robin groups. The winners and runners-up would go into a knockout round of 32 along with the teams finishing third in the eight Champions League groups.

In addition, the UEFA Cup rounds would run on a parallel calendar with the Champions League.

Platini has no doubt about the ultimate danger. He says: "We French always see things in terms of black and white. If my proposals are accepted I stay, if not I go."

Originally the idealist and revisionist in Platini wanted to see the Champions League scrapped altogether and the competition restored to the old direct knockout system. Since then, he has learned that today's commercial imperatives make that an impossible dream. His latest plan is, at a personal level, an enormous compromise.

The extent to which a once-great football player evolves into a great football politician will be how he goes about getting his way when UEFA's executive votes in Istanbul in November.

Platini knows that this time he has no more room for compromise. ●

The Bob Vaughan we knew

THE DESCRIPTION "one of nature's gentlemen" is vastly overused but in the case of Bob Vaughan, *World Soccer's* eastern European correspondent for years, amply justified.

Bob, who has died aged 67, extended his original boyhood devotion to football to a playing peak as a goalkeeper with non-league Kingstonian. But his "real" career led him into education and, ultimately, to a role with the British Institute in Vienna, which, with his command of German, opened doors for him throughout central Europe.

Later he turned to sports journalism as a means of pursuing his love of football and began writing for *World Soccer* in the 1970s.

For well over a decade his insight into not only eastern European football but also its cultural and political context made him unique among the region's commentators and observers.

The subsequent coincidence of retirement and reunification took Bob back to Germany and a new home in Berlin, where he died suddenly.

My last memory of Bob was seeing him edge his way seamlessly through the media scrum at this year's Champions League Final in Athens; that was Bob Vaughan – not only one of nature's gentlemen but also, to summon up another cliche that would have prompted an appropriate smile, a gentle giant.

A memorial service is scheduled for Christ Church, East Sheen, London SW14 on November 13 at midday.

Lost cause

When will teams realise that long goalkeeper kicks tend to give the ball away?

WE SEE QUITE a lot of this in every game these days. The goalkeeper dribbling the ball slowly, almost pensively, out of his area. No one challenges him so he has plenty of time to tee the ball up as he surveys the field. Then, having apparently selected his target, he gives the ball an almighty clout, and...And what? I'm coming to that. Let me first take a diversion into the world of statistics.

The growing (well, I think it's growing) move towards finding a statistic for every little thing that happens on a football pitch means that no broadcast is now complete without figures for "possession".

The assumption seems to be: high possession percentage is good, low is bad. The more possession you have, then...well, what? I haven't been able to work out any connection to anything yet. A high possession percentage doesn't seem to be, automatically, linked to winning, or to playing attractive football for that matter.

I rather doubt that this particular stat is ever going to mean much – after all, you can maintain a high possession percentage by making square and back passes in your own half. Now, if the figures said "possession in opposing half" we might have something. I haven't seen that stat, but given the mania for figures I imagine some nerdy group has it all worked out somewhere.

Back to goalkeepers – one group that clearly does not bother with possession stats. Their aim seems to be to give the ball to the opposition as frequently as possible. And they have plenty of opportunities to do just that.

Make a guess: how many times in this season's Aston Villa v Liverpool game did the goalkeepers launch the ball deep, down to the other end of the field? Answer coming up. I know it, because I counted...and was surprised to find that the mixture of long goal-kicks, free-kicks, clearance kicks and punts came to...40. That's about twice as many as I'd thought there might be.

What happens next

Warming to my task, I decided to find out what happens to those kicks when, eventually, they plummet to earth. Unable to stomach the idea of watching Villa-Liverpool again, I scanned another Premier League game, Fulham v Tottenham.

This time I was not surprised at the number of kicks. I was shocked – the total was 60. As we're told that the actual playing time of a 90-minute game is usually around 60 minutes, that gives us one long, high missile per minute.

As to the end result of these kicks, I've classified them in three ways: possession by the goalkeeper's team; possession given to opponents; and ugly – meaning a series of usually desperate headers before someone manages to settle the ball. On the first two categories I'm being charitable, because it is rare for these long kicks to be immediately and comfortably controlled by friend or foe.

These are the totals. Possession by goalkeeper's team – 10, or 17 per cent; possession given to opponents – 36, or 60 per cent; ugly – 14, or 23 per cent.

To get one thing out of the way. That huge total of 60 – could that be something special to the Premier League, to the English game? It might be. I did a similar count during the United States-Brazil friendly and came up with only 26 long goalkeeper kicks. Food for thought there.

Returning to the Fulham-Spurs stats. Here we have the goalkeeper giving the ball away on 60 per cent of his kicks. How can that be acceptable? You can be quite certain that any outfield player with that low a success ratio would be dropped.

Generally speaking, the kicks serve one purpose only: to shift the ball as far down the field as possible. What happens as the ball drops, the struggle for possession, the usual loss of possession, seem not to be of great concern. Only on three occasions – three out of 60! – did the long kicks cause serious problems for opponents. On the other hand, one of the kicks by Fulham's Antti Niemi went straight to a Spurs defender and, three passes later, Gareth Bale had scored for Spurs.

In short, my stats show something that anyone who's given the matter a moment's thought must surely have known: that long goalkeeper kicks accomplish very little, apart from giving the ball to the opposition. They are one of the most unintelligent episodes of the sport. South American keepers have at least tried to alter this, by delivering side-volleyed punts, which give a lower trajectory, getting the ball to its target quicker and in a more controllable way. I don't recall ever seeing European keepers use this technique.

Towering kicks by keepers are an accepted, traditional part of the game. During the Fulham-Spurs game, the television camera caught Spurs manager Martin Jol as a goal-kick was being taken – his eyes raised as he followed the flight of the ball. It seems there is a fascination with a soaring soccer ball.

The iniquities of the keepers' kicks do not cease with giving the ball away. Those examples I've grouped under "ugly" – nearly a quarter of the total – are instances where both sides fight to bring the ball under control. Usually they involve a sequence of clumsy heading duels, with plenty of elbow action. Ugly, indeed.

Obviously, goalkeeper kicks play havoc with the beautiful game and destroy any notion of intelligent football. And they can do that up to 60 times a game! ●

Illustration by Dave Semple

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Been there, Dein that

Arsenal's former vice-chairman is not the first ex-club boss to yearn for a return to football

FOUR BROODING months for David Dein after he was escorted out of the Emirates stadium for allying himself with US businessman Stan Kroenke, and Arsenal's former vice-chairman conjured a typically brazen response. He had sold his 14.58 per cent stake in the club to Uzbek businessman Alisher Usmanov and Iranian Farhad Moshiri, banking £75million, but he was also heading their Red & White Holdings vehicle, with a brief to buy more Arsenal shares and regain his involvement in the club.

One or two commentators were pretty scathing about Dein's naked desire to get back in the boardroom, his pleas that he has Arsenal's interests at heart and his urgings that Arsenal need "investment" to compete with England's already-taken-over clubs. Some pointed out that Arsenal, settled into the new stadium (a move Dein originally opposed) and with Arsene Wenger enthusiastically signing a new contract, are managing rather well without the man who had been written up as "Mr Arsenal" ever since he bought his first batch of shares, for £292,000, in 1983.

Yet Dein's campaign to stay enmeshed in the club's inner workings while still making a fortune from selling shares is not, when you look at it closely, so very different from the exits of other clubs' major shareholders who have cashed in over this last frenetic year. Most have shuffled off with millions in their pockets but not with the ecstatic whoops of pools winners, rather the glum faces of sacked men.

David Moores made £89m when he sold his 51 per cent of Liverpool to Tom Hicks and George Gillett in February, but Rick Parry, the club's chief executive, insisted his former chairman had lived for Liverpool. He said Moores had sold only so richer men could guarantee the club's borrowings to build the long-awaited new stadium, and that the day Moores ceded his shares and position was, even for £89m, "the worst of his life".

Diminished Doug

Doug Ellis made around £20m from selling his Aston Villa shares to Randy Lerner last summer, yet the money does not seem to have brought him happiness, either. He also lived for being a major club chairman, and he appears a diminished, almost spectral presence in the Villa Park directors' box, the great and the good pushing past him to introduce themselves to the new regime.

At Newcastle, the Hall family did appear hugely satisfied with their departure in July, smoothed by the £55m Mike Ashley paid them for their 41.6 per cent stake; for some years the Halls, with Sir John retired and the family business in trouble, have been willing sellers. The club's chairman, Freddy Shepherd, was paid £33m for his shares, another booming return, yet he was not nearly as happy. Shepherd had resisted selling until bounced into it by Ashley's swoop on the Halls' shares, and clearly felt wounded when he left the club, suddenly no longer wanted as the chairman.

In September, Shepherd was spotted having lunch with Ken Bates, another club owner who, after selling Chelsea in 2003 for £17m, found retirement in Monaco unfulfilling and came back to buy Leeds, where he has, if nothing else, certainly been busy. Speculation grew that Shepherd is to take over at Elland Road; Bates denied it but did say Shepherd was "still a bit sore about what happened at Newcastle" and "would like to get back in [to football]".

Buying a smaller club with the money from selling a bigger concern is a well-trodden path; two other 1980s men, Ron Noades and Sam Hammam, cashed in resoundingly by selling Crystal Palace and Wimbledon respectively, then Noades bought Brentford, Hammam Cardiff City, where neither had the happiest of returns.

Dein's determination to regain a role at Arsenal may have seemed self-serving to some, but it is clearly part of the pattern. He timed his announcement for maximum effect, coinciding it with the Champions League group stage draw in Monaco, which brings together European football's wielders of influence. Dein certainly counted himself among them before he was shown the door at Arsenal last April, until when he had also been president of G-14.

His generation of chairmen and directors may have been seen as entrepreneurial, differing from all their predecessors because they have become the first to make personal fortunes from owning shares in clubs. But from their gloomy reactions when banking the cheques, and determination to "get back in", it seems they share with the "butcher, baker, candlestick-maker" chairmen of yore the same fundamental motivation.

Buying into the boardroom was always a path to a club's "inner sanctum", a way, often for provincial men not good enough to make it as players to claim a piece of football's magic. Selling out to international billionaires, even for vast sums, does not seem to provide the same kick. ●

Illustration by Dave Semple

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True colours...passionate Valencia fans get behind their team

Ches grandmasters

Valencia CF dominate the football scene in Spain's third city. Peterjon Cresswell reports

SPAIN'S THIRD CITY, after Madrid and Barcelona, also has two clubs in the top division, although Valencia CF are very much the flagship. They reached the Champions League Final two years running (2000 and 2001) and since then have twice seen off Real Madrid and Barcelona in the Spanish championship race (2001-02 and 2003-04) and won the UEFA Cup in 2004.

Valencia, nicknamed *Los Ches* (the lads), were transformed from also-rans in the 1990s. The city had a new urban dynamism, and the club, under president Francisco Roig, had much more financial clout.

Trailing in their wake are modest city rivals Levante, who have spent most of their existence yo-yoing between divisions. After a grim struggle, *Los Granotes* (the frogs) avoided relegation last June to book themselves another season with the big boys.

Valencia play at a football temple, the Mestalla, close to the centre of town. However, they are building a New Mestalla in the north-east of the city, the design based on Bayern Munich's highly-praised Allianz Arena. The first brick was laid this August, and the club are expected to move in at the start of the 2009-10 season. The capacity will be much greater than the current ground – 78,000 against 53,000. Levante, meanwhile,

> **In the early years, Valencia and Levante would lend each other key players if either had to face the common enemy: Barcelona**

run out at a shabby, municipal ground with a 25,000 capacity.

Despite the gap in pedigree, derbies have always been fierce. In the early years, the *Levantinos* and the *Valencianistas* met in the regional championship. But all the same, the clubs would lend each other key players if either had to face the common enemy: Barcelona. The derby of January 2005 was the clubs' first league clash for 40 years, although they had met in the Cup in between. This season's first league derby is in January, the second in May.

By a quirk of the fixture list, both big Madrid sides visit the city within a few days of each other this autumn: Atletico at Levante on the weekend of

Little and large...Levante's Laurent Courtois (in stripes) takes on David Villa of city big brothers Valencia in a league derby last January

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Have a rice day

● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT

Manises airport (top picture) (+34 961 598 515; www.aena.es) is an easy hop on lines 3 or 5 of the city's four-line metro. Also, an Aerobus runs to the city centre every 20 minutes. Information about Valencia's metro and buses can be found at www.metrovalencia.com and www.emtvalencia.es. A tourist card (€7 for one day, €12 for two) allows unlimited public transport use and access to many attractions – see www.valenciatouristcard.com.

● HOTELS

The Palau de la Mar (C/Navarro Reverter 14; +34 963 162 884; www.hospes.es; €250) is the most lauded of the new hotels. Equally chic is the Ad Hoc Monumental (C/Boix 4; +34 963 919 140; €200). For location and comfort, the beachside Hotel Neptuno (Paseo Neptuno 2; +34 963 567 777; www.hotelneptunovalencia.com; €150) can't be beaten. The main tourist office (Plaza de la Reina 19; +34 963 153 931; www.turisvalencia.com) can help book accommodation.

● EATING & DRINKING

Valencia is the home of paella, a dish traditionally served at lunchtime and best enjoyed at one of the beachside restaurants favoured by locals. Another well-known rice dish is arroz negro, blackened with squid ink. La Pepica (Paseo Neptuno 6-8; +34 963 710 366) is a famous, if pricey, haunt. Civera (C/Lerida 11; +34 963 475 917) is cheaper and equally reliable. El Timonel (Feliz Pizcueta 13; +34 963 526 300) is renowned for its seafood. Bar life revolves around the Barrio del Carmen area downtown. Try Xino Xano (C/Alta 28) and Susan Witch (C/Roteros 9). Vivir Sin Dormir (Paseo Neptuno 42) is the classic beach hangout.

● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT

Valencia's fabulous new attraction is the City of Arts and Sciences (pictured second from bottom) (Avenida Autopista del Saler 1; +34 902 100 031; www.cac.es), a complex of planetarium, oceanarium, opera house, laser dome and IMAX cinema. Its most striking architectural elements have been created by local hero Santiago Calatrava, whose comb-like bridge is one of 19 across the dried-up Turia river. The modern art at IVAM (C/Guillem de Castro 118; +34 963 863 000; www.ivam.es) complements the Goyas and El Grecos at the Museo de Bellas Artes (C/San Pio V 9; +34 963 870 300; www.cult.gva.es/mbav). Valencia's two main markets are both feats of *modernista* architecture: the vast Mercado Central (bottom picture) (Plaza del Mercado) and the Mercado Colon (C/Cirilio Amoros).

● AFTER DARK

Le New Club (C/Eugenia Vines 152), down by the beach, is a decent choice.

October 28/29 and then the big one, Real at the Mestalla in a midweek match.

Valencia, one of Europe's most exciting sides over the past decade, have relied for many years on pacy South American players to please the boisterous Mestalla faithful. In the early 1960s it was Brazilians Chicao and Waldo, who helped the *Ches* win the Fairs Cup two seasons running. In 1980, Argentinian World Cup forward Mario Kempes scored the goals that took Valencia to another European final, the Cup-winners Cup, when they beat Arsenal on penalties.

With Roig as president in the moneyed 1990s, Valencia hired the best coaches – Jorge Valdano, Luis Aragones, Carlos Alberto Parreira – and yet more big South American names such as Romario, Claudio Lopez and Ariel Ortega. Two key Spaniards, goalkeeper Santiago Canizares and midfielder Gaizka Mendieta, also starred, and when new Argentinian coach Hector Cuper brought in compatriot winger Kily Gonzalez, Valencia started winning domestic cups, challenging for the League and made those two Champions League final appearances.

The domestic league triumphs earlier this decade came under Rafa Benitez. His less spectacular but more solid squad took advantage of managerial in-fighting and dips in form at Real and Barca to nip in and win La Liga.

Valencia, backed by the genial, manic drummer Manolo, are one of those rare clubs who are local enough to be in touch with their fans while firmly ensconced in the European elite. All that may change with the new, less intimate stadium. ●

Worth shouting about...Vicente enjoys a goal for Valencia

THE STADIUMS

The Ciutat de Valencia

The Mestalla

Drum major

Valencia's steep-sided Mestalla stadium (Avenida Aragon 33; +34 963 372 626), opened in 1923, is a short walk from Aragon station on metro line 5, two stops from central Colon. You can also access via Facultats on line 3. After cutting down C/Doctor Juan Regia, you soon come to the ground. The main ticket office is open 10am-2pm, 5pm-8pm on weekdays before a matchday, Saturdays 10am-2pm, and three hours before kick-off.

Facing the booths is Plaza de Valencia CF, where you'll find a modest club shop and three bars in a row. One, the Museo Deportivo de Manolo del Bombo, is a shrine to the game and the career of the smiling, rotund gentleman behind the bar, he of the huge drum the cameraman always picks out when Spain play in the World Cup. Photographs of Manolo's travels cover every inch of space on the walls.

There is another club shop in the centre of town, at Pintor Sorolla 25, a modern, well-stocked two-storey establishment that also sells match tickets. The Valencia faithful gather in the Fondo Norte (north end). For the neutral, a spot in the Tribuna Numerada offers the best view for a reasonable price.

Levante's Ciutat de Valencia stadium can be reached by bus – take the No 11 from the Plaza del Ayuntamiento to C/Santiago Rusinol, also accessed from Machado metro station. There are ticket offices at either end of the stadium along Rusinol – the furthest one from the main Avenida de Alfahir road stands beside the modest club shop.

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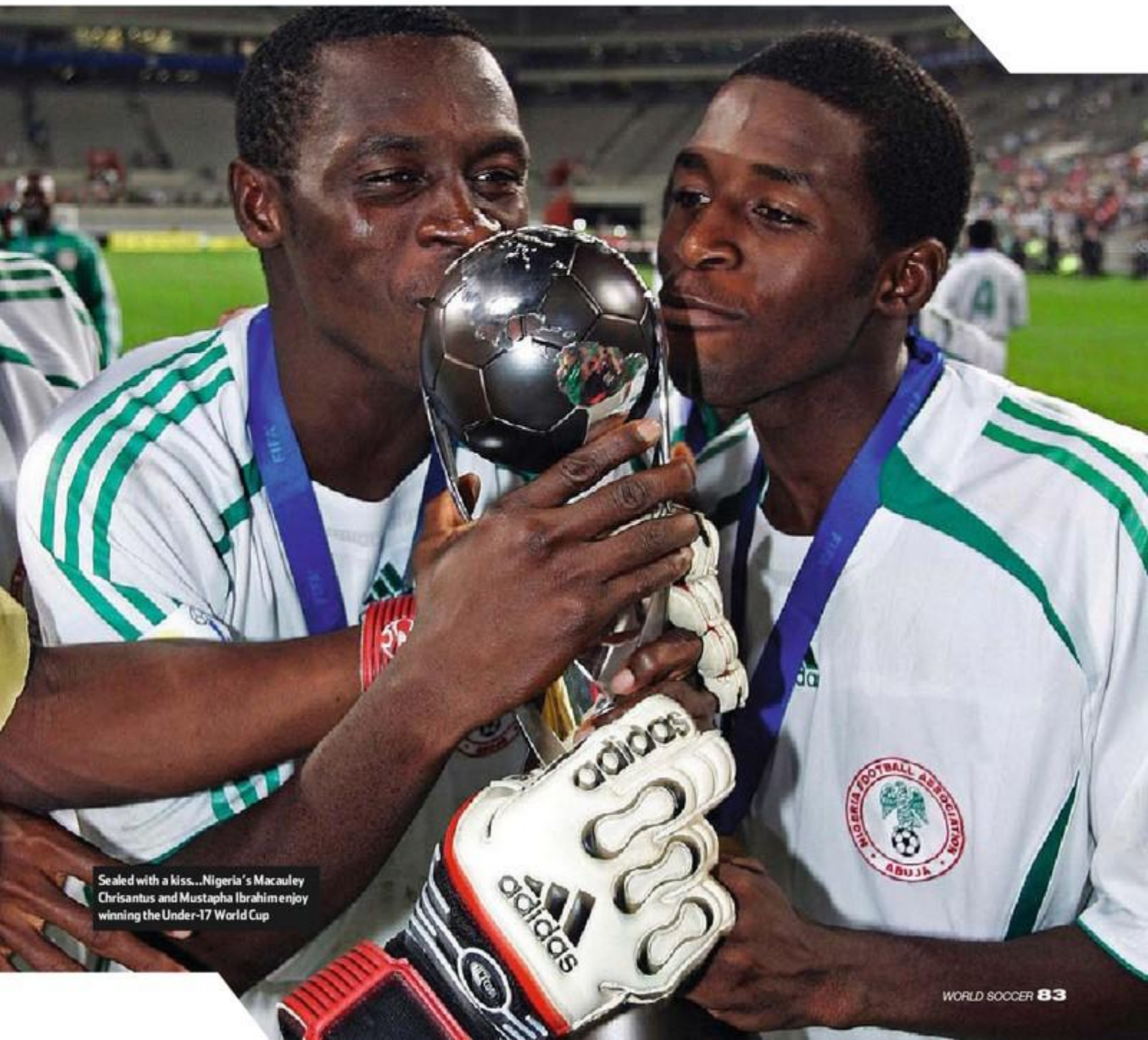

Sealed with a kiss...Nigeria's Macauley Chrisantus and Mustapha Ibrahim enjoy winning the Under-17 World Cup

Three up for Nigeria

Full stop...Oladele Ajiboye wins the trophy for Nigeria by saving another Spanish penalty

AFRICA CONTINUES to produce talented footballers in abundance. That was the lesson from the Under-17 World Cup in South Korea, where Nigeria were crowned champions after beating Spain on penalties in the Final in Seoul.

It was Nigeria's third title but their first since 1993, when Nwankwo Kanu and Celestine Babayaro featured in the team. However, they were two of only four of the 18-player squad who went on to have notable careers with European clubs (the others were Pascal Ojigwe and Wilson Oruna). The rest fell by the wayside.

The same fate may yet befall many of the class of 2007, but the names of tournament top scorer Macauley Chrisantus, captain Lukman Haruna, playmaker Rabiu Ibrahim and keeper Oladele Ajiboye are worth noting.

Ajiboye was the hero of Nigeria's 3-0 shoot-out win that followed a typically anti-climactic Final, a goalless draw. "Our goalkeeper saved the penalties so confidently because we've been practising a lot and it paid off," said Nigeria coach Yemi Tella.

"We couldn't score during the game tonight, but it's normal that young players tend to get nervous in a Final. As for the future, we're building this team to be a foundation for the senior national team."

This was the third defeat in the Final for long-time Spain coach Juan Santisteban and it was clearly too hard to take since he stepped down. Spain sorely missed Bojan Krkic in the Final. The Barcelona prodigy had been one of the stars of the tournament but was sent off in the semi-final.

Germany collected the bronze medal after beating Ghana in the play-off match, and had the outstanding player of the tournament in Toni Kroos.

The strong performances by the European and African teams was in stark contrast to the showing of the Latin Americans. Defending champions Mexico had failed to qualify, while the exit of Brazil and Argentina in the first knockout round and quarter-finals respectively meant there was no South American representation in the semis for the first time since 1989, when the tournament was for Under-16s.

The Final was played at Seoul's

It's not fair!...Spain's Bojan is distraught about being sent off, putting him out of the Final

World Cup stadium and attracted a crowd of 36,125. But only one other 2002 arena was used, the Seogwipo stadium on Jeju island.

There was disappointment for the host team in Group A. South Korea lost to Peru and Costa Rica, and a 2-1 defeat of Togo was not enough to allow them to qualify for the knockout stages as one of the best four third-placed sides.

England, taking part in the finals for the first time, recovered from an early setback in Group B – conceding a late equaliser to North Korea – to beat New Zealand 5-0 and then Brazil 2-1, the winner of the latter game scored by Arsenal defender Jordan Spence. The result meant they finished top of the group, condemning runners-up Brazil to a tough first knockout round match against Ghana.

Argentina held

Pre-tournament favourites Spain topped Group C, two points clear of Argentina, who had surprisingly been held to a draw by Syria.

In Group D, Nigeria beat France 2-1 in the opening game and also won their two other games. France were then held by Haiti and looked to be heading home after Japan took a half-time lead in their final group match. But they rallied to win 2-1.

Tunisia won all their games in Group E. Tajikistan had staged a thrilling comeback to win their opening game 4-3 against the United States and eventually took one of the best third-place berths. The Americans took the runners-up spot only on goal difference having beaten Belgium 2-0.

Germany and Ghana cruised through Group F, with the Germans taking top spot by beating the Africans 3-2 having been 3-0 ahead.

The first knockout round matches all went to form with the exception of Ghana's defeat of Brazil. Isaac Donkor scored the only goal of a hard-fought game, even harder for the Ghanaians since they had Francis Boadi sent off shortly before the break.

In the quarter-finals, Spain beat France on penalties after a 1-1 draw. Germany overpowered England, who were without injured top scorer Victor Moses. Ghana saw off Peru 2-0 with goals from Sadick Adams and Ransford Osei. And in one of the most significant results of the tournament, Nigeria beat Argentina thanks to first-half goals from Haruna and Chrisantus.

Bojan secured Spain's place in the Final when scoring in extra-time against Ghana following a 1-1 draw after 90 minutes. But he picked up a second yellow card for an innocuous-looking challenge 10 seconds before the final whistle.

In the other semi, Nigeria were 2-0 up against Germany within 20 minutes, thanks to Chrisantus' seventh goal of the tournament and a Yakubu Alfa effort. Kroos pulled one back before half-time, sparking an open second half. Kabiru Akinsola ensured Nigeria's passage by lobbing keeper Rene Vollath in injury-time.

John Holmesdale

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SIX OF THE BEST

Stars of the finals

Toni Kroos, Germany
The next big thing at Bayern Munich, his creativity, eye for goal and free-kick expertise made him a popular choice as the player of the tournament. See Headliners, page 14.

Creativity...Kroos

Macauley Chrisantus, Nigeria
The tournament's top scorer with seven goals. The striker's physical maturity and mighty right foot were the foundations of the Golden Eaglets' triumph.

Jairo Hernandez, Peru
A keenly competitive yet calming influence at the heart of the Peruvian defence. But the Alianza Lima youngster found his family home in Pisco destroyed by an earthquake on his return to Peru.

Calming...Hernandez

Steady nerves...De Gea

David De Gea, Spain
Steady of nerve and sharp of reflex, the Atletico Madrid keeper showed why he has been likened by Iberian coaches to Edwin Van der Sar.

Ransford Osei, Ghana
Diminutive, pacy attacker whose six goals and three assists reportedly caught the eye of some elite European clubs.

Eye-catching...Osei

Dangerous...Saivet

Henri Saivet, France
The electrifying right-flank bursts of the Bordeaux teenager always spelled danger; Premiership scouts are understandably salivating.

Top scorer...Chrisantus

Top of the pile...James McFadden is mobbed by team-mates after scoring the goal against France that put Scotland at the head of Group B

Scots on the march

THERE WAS no doubt about the outstanding result of the latest rounds of Euro 2008 qualifying matches: Scotland's 1-0 victory over France in Paris. The win, courtesy of James McFadden's spectacular goal, sent the Scots to the top of Group B, a point ahead of Italy and two clear of the French. Scotland's surge means that one of last year's World Cup finalists are now in real danger of not making it to Austria/Switzerland, since only the top two in each group qualify.

A large contingent of the Tartan Army helped make it a packed Parc des Princes and they saw their side defend stoically and at times heroically against a French side shorn of the suspended Thierry Henry. Goalkeeper Craig Gordon was particularly effective, saving efforts from Florent Malouda, Franck Ribery and Nicolas Anelka. Then in the 64th minute McFadden unleashed a ferocious long-range shot that looped over keeper Mickael Landreau.

"We have all made a nation very, very happy," said Scotland manager Alex McLeish. "I think this goal is one of the greatest and most important for Scottish football."

Scotland had gone into the Paris game boosted by a 3-1 victory over Lithuania at Hampden Park, when McFadden also scored.

France's defeat put coach Raymond Domenech under more pressure. Four days earlier he had been forced to watch from the stands as his side drew 0-0 with Italy in Milan, a punishment for his allegation that Italy had attempted to fix an Under-21 match against the French a few years earlier.

Four days later Italy won 2-1 in Ukraine, both their goals scored on the break by Udinese striker Antonio Di Natale.

France have the easier run-in, but must win all three matches, against the Faroe Islands (away), Lithuania (home) and Ukraine (away), to make sure of qualification. Scotland have difficult home games against Ukraine and Italy either side of a trip to Georgia. Italy face Georgia and the Faroe Islands, both at home, as well as the trip to Scotland.

It was draws all round in Group A, with leaders Poland held by closest rivals Portugal and Finland. Portugal also drew 1-1 with Serbia, who had earlier been held 0-0 by the Finns. The results left Poland

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on course to qualify for their first European Championship finals. But their late equaliser against the Portuguese in Lisbon was highly fortuitous.

The visitors had gone ahead through Mariusz Lewandowski just before half-time; Maniche levelled shortly after the interval. Cristiano Ronaldo then looked to have sealed a home win but with two minutes left a Jacek Krzynowek shot bounced off both goalposts and keeper Ricardo before entering the net.

Portugal conceded another late equaliser four days later against Serbia. Simao Sabrosa had given them the lead from a free-kick in the 11th minute, but with the clock running down Branislav Ivanovic turned in a Dejan Stankovic free-kick.

The frustration of Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari boiled over in injury-time. He appeared to lash out at Serbian defender Ivica Dragutinovic as the player walked off having been dismissed. UEFA announced an investigation; Scolari issued an apology.

Greece are favourites to win Group C after a hard-fought 2-2 draw with Norway in Oslo. Eintracht Frankfurt striker Sotirios Kyrgiakos twice put the Greeks ahead in the first half; the hosts replied through John Carew, with a header, and then John Arne Riise, a spectacular shot.

The result left Greece two points clear of Norway and Turkey and with a game in hand over the Norwegians.

Turkey coach Fatih Terim faced fierce criticism after his side could manage only a 2-2 draw away to Malta, who had gone ahead twice. But the Turks got their campaign back on track with a 3-0 defeat of Hungary in Istanbul. They had been kept at bay for an hour but took full advantage after the visitors' Zoltan Gera was sent off in the 63rd minute.

Norway's qualification hopes were boosted by a 1-0 win in Moldova courtesy of a Steffen Iversen header.

Germany and the Czech Republic are well clear in Group D, the third-placed Republic of Ireland trailing them by eight points and six points respectively. The Germans enjoyed a comfortable 2-0 win over Wales in Cardiff, both goals from Miroslav Klose, and will secure qualification if they avoid defeat away to the Irish in their next game.

The Czechs beat San Marino 3-0 away and then the Republic 1-0 at home thanks to a well-worked early goal. Defender Marek Jankulovski exchanged passes with Jaroslav Plasil before firing home.

Leading man...Michael Owen puts England ahead in the victory over Russia as the recalled Emile Heskey looks on

England victories

England stormed back into contention in Group E after comfortable home wins over Israel and Russia, both 3-0. Injuries to first-choice players Frank Lampard, David Beckham, Wayne Rooney and Owen Hargreaves and the suspension of Peter Crouch forced manager Steve McClaren into a number of changes, including the recall of Wigan centre-forward Emile Heskey and Aston Villa midfielder Gareth Barry. But the team gelled, and the results put England up to second.

Croatia remain top, two points clear, after a 2-0 win over Estonia and a 6-0 demolition of Andorra.

Group F remains wide open, with Sweden and Spain locked on 19 points, Northern Ireland three points back in third and Denmark a further two points back but with a game in hand on Spain and the Irish.

The Spanish managed only a 1-1 draw in Iceland after having Xabi Alonso sent off in the 20th minute for fouling Arnar Vidarsson. Emil Hallfredsson headed the hosts in front in the 40th minute, and Spain left it late to equalise, Andres Iniesta converting with just four minutes remaining.

A goal in each half from Xavi and Fernando Torres gave the Spanish victory over Latvia in Oviedo four days later.

Sweden stayed top on head-to-head record after their 0-0 draw at home to Denmark.

Northern Ireland, who led the group earlier in the campaign, suffered two defeats – 1-0 in Latvia and 2-1 in Iceland.

Holland and Romania are well-placed in Group G, both two points clear of Bulgaria, their only remaining challenger, and with a game in hand.

Real Madrid duo Wesley Sneijder and Ruud Van Nistelrooy scored for the Dutch in Amsterdam to end the Bulgarians' unbeaten run. Against Albania four days later, Van Nistelrooy scored the only goal in injury-time. Romania played only once, a 3-1 victory in Belarus.

Gavin Hamilton

Two's careless...Portugal concede a late equaliser for the second game running as Serbia's Ivanovic turns in a Stankovic free-kick

HOLLAND

Ajax blow it again

Out of luck...Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (right) sees a chance go begging during Ajax's defeat by Slavia Prague

AJAX FAILED TO qualify for the Champions League group stage for the second season running, losing 3-1 on aggregate to Slavia Prague in the third qualifying round following their capitulation to FC Copenhagen last term.

Once again Urby Emanuelson played a large part in the defeat. Last season, the young left-back was to blame for Copenhagen goals; this time he conceded the penalty in the home, first leg that allowed Slavia to win 1-0.

The elimination is estimated to have cost Ajax £7million and put extra pressure on coach Henk Ten Cate. True, his main target is to win the Dutch championship, but Ajax duly followed up their defeat in Prague by managing only a 2-2 draw at home to Groningen in the League.

Arch-rivals Feyenoord, who are not competing in Europe this season, kicked off the league campaign by winning their first three matches without conceding a goal. New signings Roy Makaay, Giovanni Van Bronckhorst, Nuri Sahin, Kevin Hofland and Tim De Cler have clearly settled in quickly, and the fans are already dreaming of a title in 2008, the club's centenary. Vitesse Arnhem were the only other side to win three out of three.

Brazilian striker Afonso Alves failed in his attempt to force his way out of Heerenveen, with whom he is under contract until 2011, despite strong interest from AZ Alkmaar and Middlesbrough. Last season's league top scorer skipped training sessions, refused to turn up for games and even failed to show to receive the Dutch League's player of the season award.

PSV bought striker Danny Koevermans from AZ to replace Sevilla-bound Arouna Kone. That prompted AZ to gamble on Mounir El Hamdaoui from Willem II. The former Tottenham striker missed almost the whole of last season with a severe knee injury.

Other notable last-minute transfers were Spanish forward Albert Luque (Newcastle to Ajax), South Korean forward Lee Chun-soo (Ulsan Hyundai to Feyenoord) and free agent keeper Sander Westerveld (to Sparta, replacing the injured Harald Wapenaar).

Utrecht were plunged into crisis when the board fired chairman Jan Willem Van Dop for perceived financial mismanagement. However, Van Dop got the support of players, coaching staff, fans and sponsors and took the matter to court. The judge duly ruled Van Dop should return to his post, which prompted the board to resign.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

PORTUGAL

Maritimo rise with Ariza

Only two teams had 100 per cent records after three league rounds – defending champions Porto and, surprisingly, Maritimo. The Funchal club, led by former Brazil coach Sebastiao Lazaroni, largely had Ariza Makukula to thank for their good run. The striker, who has shone in Spain in recent seasons, scored three goals during wins at home to Pacos Ferreira and Academica, and at Boavista.

Porto's run included impressive victories over Sporting Braga and Sporting Lisbon. Winger Ricardo Quaresma picked up where he left off last season with two goals and two assists in the first three matches.

Sporting Lisbon's defeat by Porto was their first in 24 league matches.

Pedro Pinto

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AUSTRIA

Senekowitsch dies at 73

Helmut Senekowitsch, the coach who guided Austria to the second group stage of the 1978 World Cup, has died at the age of 73 in Klosterneuburg near Vienna.

The Austrians were a modest outfit

when Senekowitsch took charge in 1976 but, having taken them into the finals, the coach then steered them to the top of their first-stage group, ahead of Brazil on goal difference.

The Austrians lost their next two games, putting them out of contention for a place in the Final, but they enjoyed a famous victory in their last match, 3-2 against "big brother" West Germany.

Senekowitsch began his coaching career at Grazer AK then led VOEST Linz to a surprise championship success in 1973-74. After leaving the Austria post, he coached in Germany, Spain, Mexico and Greece, as well as back in his homeland. He went on to become a university lecturer on football.

Senekowitsch played 18 times for Austria, including appearances at the 1958 World Cup. In 1961, he became the first Austrian to play regularly in the Spanish top division, with Real Betis.

Harry Miltner

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Drogheda fall on their feet

Drogheda United, who have never won the league title, were still eight points clear of the pack with eight games to play despite a shock home defeat by UCD in early September during a run of four games without a win.

Closest challengers St Patrick's Athletic also had a bad run of form – taking just four points from five games – to allow Shamrock Rovers to catch them.

League Cup holders Derry City are back in the Final after a penalty shoot-out win against Shelbourne. They will face Bohemians on October 9.

The Eircom League is introducing a wage cap from next season, with clubs allowed to spend only 65 per cent of their turnover.

Kevin Kilbane extended his national team record when he appeared in the Republic's Euro 2008 qualifying defeat by the Czech Republic. It was the Wigan player's 45th consecutive competitive international, stretching back to November 1999.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Good for Vaduz

Vaduz continued their good start to the season, thrashing Servette 5-1 at home then beating Schaffhausen 3-1 away. Odirlei Gaspar scored a second-half hat-trick in the former game.

Two players departed Vaduz just before the transfer window closed – Argentinian midfielder Guillermo Alastra returned home to former club Mendoza, and Yoann Langlet signed for African Champions League semi-finalists Al Ittihad of Libya.

Graeme Crawford

BELGIUM

Anderlecht pay heavy price

Target man...Mbokani hit four goals in his first five league games for Standard

ANDERLECHT'S MISERY at going out of the Champions League was compounded by an £8,000 fine from UEFA following the unruly behaviour of their fans during the home, second leg of the qualifying tie against Fenerbahce. Supporters threw missiles on to the pitch and some attempted to invade it during the 2-0 defeat (3-0 on aggregate).

Anderlecht have also been forced to watch their former striker Dieumerci Mbokani struck a rich vein of form for rivals Standard Liege, who were on a scoring spree as they won all their first five league games. The DR Congo international, who moved in the summer, hit four goals, while Serb strike partner Milan Jovanovic went even better with seven. Standard scored four times in each of their first four games then beat Club Brugge 2-1.

The Liege club have shown their faith in 19-year-old Steven Defour by naming him captain to succeed former Portugal midfielder Sergio Conceicao, now in Kuwait.

Anderlecht cashed in on Burundi-born striker Mohammed Tchite, who hit 20 league goals last term, selling him to Racing Santander for £5.1million. They had bought him for just £1m from Standard last year.

Ukrainian Oleg Iachtchouk has also left the Constant Vanden Stock stadium, for Cercle Brugge, where former team-mate Glen De Boeck has just begun his coaching career.

St Truiden endured their worst start to a league campaign – five defeats out of five – under inexperienced new coach Valere Billen.

Nicholas Harling

Winner...Chipperfield gets Basle plaudits

SWITZERLAND

Child's play for Scott

BASLE'S AUSTRALIA midfielder Scott Chipperfield was toasting double fortune after his injury-time winner against Thun enabled the club to close within a point of league leaders and champions Zurich. At the final whistle he rushed to the maternity clinic where his wife had just given birth to their second son.

Zurich, who could manage only a 1-1 draw at Aarau, lost out in the Champions League qualifiers, 3-1 on aggregate to Besiktas. Sion's pairing with Galatasaray in the UEFA Cup first round no doubt brought back unhappy memories for president Christian Constantin and coach Alberto Bigon. Sion lost heavily to the Turks in 1997, a factor in the resignation of both men, though they both eventually returned.

Ivar von Rulach

Grim days...Brondby's Kasper Lorentzen gets a consolation pat as he contemplates another defeat

DENMARK

Brondby on the slide

AFTER TWO DECADES of leading the way in Danish football, on and off the field, Brondby are now in deep crisis. Long-serving chief executive Per Bjerregaard stood down after a fan protest and the team slipped into the relegation zone after losing their 23rd away game in a row.

Former Brondby goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel hoped to ride to the rescue, heading a group of investors who planned a £25million buy-out. However, the offer was turned down by the club as they considered their options. Schmeichel's previous foray into ownership at Hvidovre, another former club, a few years ago did not prove a success, and Brondby's caution was perhaps understandable.

The club have had two changes of coach since Michael Laudrup left after winning the Superliga title only two seasons ago. A repeat of that success looks a long way off. Brondby won just one of their first eight league matches, although a 1-1 draw with OB Odense in early September took them just out of the drop zone.

FC Copenhagen failed to reach the Champions League group stage despite being the better team over two legs against Benfica in the third qualifying round tie.

Jim Holden

FINLAND

Armstrong axed

HJK Helsinki sacked their previously successful English coach Keith Armstrong after an early exit from the UEFA Cup at the hands of Denmark's AaB Aalborg and a 1-0 league defeat by local rivals Honka that left them only four points clear of the relegation zone.

During his five years with the club, the Newcastle-born boss won the League and Cup twice. But HJK have looked flat in what is their centenary season and a summer spending spree did not help much. Armstrong has been criticised for overuse of long-ball tactics and for failing to develop the club's promising youngsters.

"We don't make this decision lightly; it is only the second time in decades we have changed coach during the season," said chairman Olli-Pekka Lyytikainen. "But something had to be done."

Former HJK player and youth coach Aki Hyrylainen has taken the reins until the end of the season.

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

Country mourns Eliasson

Icelandic football was stunned by the sudden death of former national coach Asgeir Eliasson, at the age of only 57. Eliasson was in charge of Iceland from 1991 to 1995, one of the most fruitful periods in their history, and also enjoyed great success at club level. He led Fram, with whom he had begun his playing career in 1967, to three league titles and three Icelandic Cups in three separate spells in charge. At the time of his death, Eliasson was challenging for promotion with second division IR.

Fittingly, the national side put in one of their best performances for many months a few hours before Eliasson

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died, coming within four minutes of a Euro 2008 qualifying victory over Spain, against whom the coach had begun his Iceland reign with a 2-0 win in 1991.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

Red cards and records

Viggo Jensen won his first game in charge of the national team, 2-1 over Andorra in the Euro 2008 qualifiers, but it was a struggle. Indrek Zelinski, whom Jensen had persuaded to come out of international retirement, hit a lucky last-minute winner but was then sent off after picking up a second booking for removing his shirt in celebration. Estonia had played the entire second half with 10 men after the dismissal of Ragnar Klavan on the stroke of half-time.

Jensen had also persuaded Martin Reim to return to the international fold, and the 36-year-old's appearance against Andorra set a European record of 151 caps, eclipsing Lothar Matthaus' previous mark for Germany.

Andres Must

LATVIA

Builder at work

National coach Aleksandrs Starkovs was keeping his feet firmly on the ground after his side beat Northern Ireland 1-0 in the Euro 2008 qualifiers, their first win for 11 months. "Building a team is similar to building a new house. We are still in the early stages and will need a lot of time," said Starkovs, who led Latvia to the Euro 2004 finals and began his second spell at the helm in April.

Andres Must

SCOTLAND

Foreign influence

Rangers won their first five league games to lead champions Celtic by two points. Foreign signings Jean-Claude Darcheville, DaMarcus Beasley, Carlos Cuellar and Daniel Cousin have settled in quickly, dispelling the belief outsiders need time to adjust to the Scottish game. Rangers and Celtic also made the Champions League group stage.

Alan Fairley

WALES

Saints sink

Champions The New Saints made a disastrous start to the new league campaign, losing their first two games, including a 5-1 hammering at Aberystwyth. They recovered their composure in the first home match at their new ground in Oswestry, thrashing Caersws 6-0, and followed up with a 2-1 win at Bangor. Llanelli set the early pace by winning their first four games.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Kids give hope to Glens

Glentoran, who are likely to be among the title contenders this season, have a number of highly promising young players at their disposal, including 15-year-old goalkeeper Wayne Drummond, who became the youngest player to represent the club when appearing as a substitute in a County Antrim Shield game.

Roy Kitson

Cashing in...Figueiredo has moved to Qatar

NORWAY

Stig stops at Start

WHEN Stig Inge Bjornebye became head coach at Start in July last year his main objective was to save the club from relegation. His arrival gave the players new energy and the team did stay up.

This term, however, results changed for the worse and a 3-2 defeat by Valerenga in the 19th round left them with only three wins. Straight after the game, Bjornebye said: "I will never give up," but then resigned, saying he was taking the blame. The former Liverpool player was assistant to national coach Age Hareide when tempted to join Start, despite having no experience as a club coach.

The new boss is Swede Benny Lennartson, who led Viking to league and cup titles in the 1990s.

Brann continued to lead the way in the League, boosted by the return of Azar Karadas after spells at rivals Rosenborg and Benfica. During the 1-0 home win over Sandefjord, the fans displayed a banner that read: "We hated you so much only because we love you," a reference to the furious reaction when he left for Rosenborg in 2002.

Sigurd Odegaard

Taking the blame...Bjornebye quit because of Start's poor run of form

SWEDEN

Will AIK wilt without Wilton?

JUST AS THE battle for the league title hotted up, AIK shocked their fans by selling one of their best players, Wilton Figueiredo, to Rayyan SC of Qatar.

In August the 25-year-old Brazilian forward was voted the League's best player by supporters. But he made no secret about his motives for moving, saying: "This offer was just too good to turn down. It could make me financially secure for life."

AIK fans fear Figueiredo's exit could give the edge in the title race to arch-rivals Djurgardens, who took top spot in early September with six games to go by winning 4-1 at Helsingborgs.

Previous leaders and champions Elfsborg, who could only draw 2-2 at Gefle, sold midfielder Samuel Holmen to Denmark's Brondby. AIK's 2-1 win away to Hammarby on the same day put them level with Elfsborg, a point behind Djurgardens.

IFK Gothenburg bought striker Tobias Hysen from Sunderland. Gothenburg-born Hysen's move follows a proud family tradition. His great-grandfather, grandfather and father, Glenn, the ex-Liverpool defender, all wore the blue and white of IFK.

Struggling Orebro replaced coach Patrick Walker with Urban Hammer.

Pentti Hietanen

TURKEY

Fast or loose?

No objections...Galatasaray coach Karl-Heinz Feldkamp

THE ANNUAL debate about whether devout Muslim players should be allowed to fast during Ramadan dominated football talk in the run-up to the holy month, which began on September 13.

Galatasaray's veteran German coach Karl-Heinz Feldkamp, just back for a second spell, came out in favour, saying: "If you declare certain bans and then are unable to implement them there is no point in doing it." Fenerbahce's Brazilian coach Zico, another new appointment, held a meeting with his players in order to determine his strategy, but usually the club plan their training around the daily fast-breaking meal that is eaten when the sun goes down.

The Turkish coaches were less accommodating. Besiktas' Ertugrul Saglam agreed to let his players fast but warned that he would reconsider if performance was affected, adding: "Before games I will certainly not allow anyone to fast." Trabzonspor's Ziya Dogan went further, telling his players: "Fasting is definitely banned. You will give the games full concentration."

Turkey coach Fatih Terim tried to brush off the media's fierce criticism that followed the team's dismal 2-2 draw with Malta in the Euro 2008 qualifiers, saying: "I don't take lessons, I give them. Heavy criticism has no value at our level...I am the one who decides the result, not anyone else...I achieved my prestige by fighting, struggling and with great effort."

This cut little ice with Terim's critics, who have slammed him for picking his old, out-of-form favourites such as 36-year-old forward Hakan Sukur, rather than trying to introduce new blood and rewarding good play.

The coach is also accused of being a law unto himself. "This is Turkey's national team, not Terim's personal team," complained Can Bartu in the *Hurriyet* newspaper. Former referee and leading commentator Erman Toroglu fumed: "In leading countries unsuccessful technical directors, federation leaders, party leaders and governments resign. What happens here? Some formula is found and they continue. Then, thanks to incredible luck you rise to third in the world without playing a single European team [a reference to Turkey's success at the 2002 World Cup] and hide behind this for 30 years."

Suna Erdem

SERBIA

Red Star miss out again

Red Star Belgrade failed once again, at their fifth attempt, to reach the Champions League group stage when losing 1-0 on aggregate to Rangers. The Scottish league runners-up were perhaps the easiest opponents after failures against Dynamo Kyiv, Bayer Leverkusen, PSV Eindhoven and Milan.

Chairman Dragan Stojkovic came under heavy fire from the media because of his choice of summer signings.

Partizan began the domestic season in impressive style, with four straight victories. The club's ultras also ended a boycott because they believed most of their goals had been reached – sports director Nenad Bjekovic has retired, secretary Zarko Zecevic is set to leave and a new chairman is to be elected soon.

Bezanija coach Miloljub Ostojic quit after the team took only one point from their first three league games. His replacement is Ratko Dostanic.

Promoted Cukaricki, whose coach Branko Babic stepped down before the start of the season, surprisingly replaced him with the almost-forgotten Dragoslav Stepanovic. He was previously prominent in the 1990s as coach of Eintracht Frankfurt and Bayer Leverkusen.

Vladimir Novak

MONTENEGRO

Halilovic axed early

Defending champions Zeta sacked coach Slobodan Halilovic after just eight games in charge following successive league defeats – against Kom and arch-rivals Buducnost.

Mladen Vukicevic has taken charge for a second time, having led the club in the late 1990s when they were in the Yugoslavian second division. His first game back in charge was against his

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younger brother and ex-Zeta coach Dejan, who has taken the reins at Mogren. Mladen won the day, 1-0, but retaining the title is a big challenge, especially since Zeta sold five of their best players this summer – Zarko Korac, Janko Tumbasevic, Marko Cetkovic, Slaven Stjepanovic and Milan Radulovic.

Vladimir Novak

GREECE

Three and out in Thessaloniki

Remarkably, Thessaloniki's three top-flight clubs all sacked their coach after just one match of the new season.

Iraklis, who lost 1-0 at home to Ergotelis, fired newly-appointed Vangelis Vlachos after he rowed with a board member. His replacement was Serb Ivan Jovanovic, who had been ousted weeks before the start of the season. Jovanovic's reinstatement is Iraklis' fifth coaching change in a year.

Spanish coach Juan Carlos Oliva exited Aris – who opened by drawing 0-0 at home with Panionios – following a rift with the board. They too have appointed a Serb, Dusan Bajevic, who previously had long, successful stints at Olympiakos, PAOK and AEK Athens.

PAOK, who lost 1-0 away to Xanthi, fired coach Giorgos Paraschos. His replacement is former Benfica and AEK boss Fernando Santos.

Lou Economopoulos

MACEDONIA

Stratev back at Vardar

Zoran Stratev has returned to the helm of Vardar Skopje, whom he led to the Champions League third qualifying round in 2003. He replaces Dragi Kanatlarovski, sacked after elimination from the UEFA Cup by Anorthosis of Cyprus.

Renova coach Vlatko Kostov quit after the team took only five points from their first five games. The club had signed several notable players over the summer and announced they were to make a serious title challenge.

Zoran Smilevski has taken charge of Shkendija for the third time following the resignation of Katip Osman. Smilevski was in charge of Renova last season.

Michel Stojmanovski

ISRAEL

Cohen chopped

Maccabi Tel Aviv fired coach Eli Cohen after a miserable start to the season – one point from two games – and there has also reportedly been trouble off the field with a row between president Lonnie Hercikowicz and major investor Roni Maana. Former Hapoel Tel Aviv coach Nir Levin has replaced Cohen.

Maccabi Haifa, who had been tipped to mount a serious title challenge, kicked off with two straight defeats, both 1-0, and are clearly missing striker Roberto Colautti, now at Borussia Monchengladbach.

Ori Lewis

MALTA

Top draw

Malta gave one of their best ever displays in the 2-2 home draw with Turkey in the Euro 2008 qualifiers. The point also took the islanders' group total to five, a record for a major qualifying tournament. Malta led twice through Brian Said and Andre Schembri, but Halil Altintop and Servet Cetin put Turkey back on terms.

"I told my players that if we scored first we would not lose," said coach Dusan Fitzel. "I firmly believe we could have won had luck been on our side."

Fitzel had just signed a new deal that will keep him in charge until the end of the 2010 World Cup qualifiers.

Domenico Aquilina

Protesting innocence...Dragusha

CROATIA

Rakitic in red and white

SCHALKE'S Ivan Rakitic, one of the most talented young players in Europe, has finally appeared in Croatia's red-and-white checks following a period of uncertainty about whether he might opt to play for the senior team of Switzerland, his country of birth.

The 19-year-old son of Croats received a standing ovation when he entered the field as a 60th-minute substitute against Estonia in the Euro 2008 qualifiers. Rakitic played for Basle before joining Schalke this summer and appeared for the Swiss national team at youth level.

A power struggle is under way within the federation after Igor Stimac, president of the top-division teams' board, backed fellow former international Zvonimir Boban to replace current federation president Vlatko Markovic. Stimac made his move after Markovic voted against his mooted expansion of the top division to 16 teams from 12.

Zdravko Reic

Check this out...Rakitic sees Croatia action against Estonia

ALBANIA

Dragusha plays on despite drugs ban

BESA DEFENDER Alban Dragusha was suspended for two years by UEFA after testing positive for a banned substance after a UEFA Cup tie, but has continued to play in the domestic league.

This caused a storm in the Albanian media, especially after Dragusha played an important part in Besa's 1-0 victory at Teuta Durres in the second league round. The federation is accused of acting irresponsibly by choosing not to take any sanction against the player.

The positive test followed Besa's UEFA Cup first qualifying round game against Bezanija in Belgrade on July 19. Dragusha continues to claim his innocence, saying: "My doctor betrayed me. He gave me drugs that contained banned substances. I feel so angry and I am desperate to prove that I haven't done anything wrong."

Gezim Nushi

UKRAINE

Shakhtar start in style

SHAKHTAR DONETSK made an impressive start to their attempt to recapture the league crown when going on a seven-game winning run after opening with a 1-1 draw with champions Dynamo Kyiv. They also progressed to the Champions League group stage after beating Salzburg 3-2 on aggregate in the third qualifying round.

Shakhtar's results so far have fully justified the astonishing investment made by billionaire owner Rinat Akhmetov. The club's capture of Brazilian playmaker Willian from Corinthians for £8million took their spending spree to £37m. Ilsinho, another Brazilian buy, from Sao Paulo for £6.7m, made an immediate impact, scoring two goals and showing an array of skills on the right side of midfield. The 21-year-old winger, who had been linked with a move to Milan or Villarreal, was bought as a possible replacement for Darijo Srna. The Croatia midfielder is set to leave next summer when his contract runs out.

Dynamo, who recovered after their poor start in the League, also reached the Champions League group stage with a 4-0 aggregate defeat of Sarajevo. However, they will be without record signing Pape Diakhate for up to three months after the Senegalese central defender broke a collar bone during a 2-0 win against FC Kharkiv.

Promoted Naftovyk Okhtyrka fired coach Serhii Shevchenko after five straight league defeats. He was replaced by Valerii Gorodov, who had been assistant at Kryvbas. Olexander Ischenko quit Karpaty Lviv after the team took only eight points from eight games. His successor is the experienced Valerii Yaremchenko, who has also led Shakhtar and Metalurh Zaporizhya.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Dance party... Shakhtar's Brandao (centre) leads the celebrations after scoring against Salzburg in the Champions League qualifier but referee Laurent Duhamel is unimpressed

POLAND

Law paves the way

The lower house of parliament has passed special legislation that should help to speed preparations for the co-hosting of Euro 2012. After the euphoria of winning the rights, with Ukraine, in April, serious doubts had been raised about whether Poland could realise its plans in time.

According to a report by sport minister Elzbieta Jakubiak, £250million will be spent on building or rebuilding four stadiums, and £5.38billion on infrastructure projects, mainly roads.

Legia Warsaw made their best start to a league campaign since the 1950s when winning their first six games and without conceding a goal under new coach Jan Urban, who worked with Osasuna's reserves in Spain before taking one of the hottest seats in Polish football.

The league success is in stark contrast to Legia's awful time in Europe this season, having been thrown out of the InterToto Cup when their fans rioted

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at half-time with the team 2-0 down in the first leg away to Vetra of Lithuania.

Dariusz Kurowski

RUSSIA

Zenit surge back

Zenit St Petersburg got back on level terms with Spartak Moscow in the championship race after beating Kuban Krasnodar 1-0 at home as their rivals were held to a 1-1 draw in the derby with defending champions CSKA.

Zenit, Russia's richest club thanks to the backing of giant energy company Gazprom, have won only one league title, in 1984, as Zenit Leningrad in the Soviet Union championship.

With seven games left, Spartak and Zenit had 43 points, with third-placed FC Moscow four points behind. The latter, backed by the capital's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, have already benefited from two summer signings. Argentina's rising star Maxi Moralez has impressed enough to become the first-choice playmaker, while compatriot and striker Maxi Lopez, signed from Barcelona, scored the winner on his second appearance.

Victor Gusev

ROMANIA

Dinamo turn to Zenga

Former Steaua Bucharest coach Walter Zenga has returned to the Romanian scene, replacing Mircea Rednic at champions Dinamo Bucharest. Dinamo turned to the former Italy keeper after failing to reach the Champions League group stage when losing 4-2 to Lazio in the third qualifying round and making a poor start to their domestic title defence.

Zenga, who is to apply for Romanian citizenship after marrying a local woman, led Steaua to the league championship in 2005.

Politehnica Timisoara striker Ionel Ganea was banned for 22 matches and fined £2,860 for attacking the referee in a match against Rapid Bucharest.

Former PSV Eindhoven player Ovidiu Stanga has taken charge of Universitatea Craiova following the resignation of Florin Cioroianu. He quit after club owner Adrian Mititelu excluded four players from the squad, reportedly without explanation. Stanga's first step was to recall the quartet, who include national team star Dorel Stoica.

Radu Timofte

HUNGARY

Long way back for Fradi

The hard times continue for record title winners Ferencvaros, who were demoted to the second division for the first time at the end of the 2005-06 season for financial irregularities. After five games this season "Fradi" lay only sixth in the second level's eastern section.

Ferencvaros, who have debts of some £5million, are up for sale for £20m, a price that includes land around their stadium, which lies between Budapest city centre and the airport.

Peterjon Cresswell

BELARUS

Stange the man

Well-travelled German coach Bernd Stange has take charge of Belarus. The 59-year-old succeeds Yuri Puntus, who resigned in June. Belarus is the seventh country for Stange, having previously coached in Germany, Australia, Ukraine, Oman, Iraq and Cyprus. He won his first game in charge, beating Israel 2-1 in a friendly, but Belarus then lost 3-1 to Romania in the Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Mr Unhappy...Berbatov

CZECH REPUBLIC

Trouble at Sparta

SPARTA PRAGUE failed to reach the Champions League group stage, losing 5-0 on aggregate to Arsenal, at the end of a turbulent month for the club. Midfielder Pavel Horvath was fined £4,900 after giving a Nazi salute during the 4-1 league derby win at Viktoria Zizkov, which had been marred by crowd trouble and anti-Semitic chanting from Sparta fans.

After studying video evidence and soliciting expert opinion, the Czech FA's disciplinary commission judged the gesture to have been an ill-conceived joke. Horvath, who has a reputation as a joker, seems to have been responding to Sparta fans chanting the name of assistant coach and former player Horst Siegl in the style of the Nazi "Sieg Heil" chant.

Earlier in the month, Sparta coach Michal Bilek was assaulted in a restaurant in Prague, in what he said was an unprovoked attack. The assailant is unknown.

Slavia Prague reached the Champions League group stage at the sixth attempt, beating Ajax 1-0 in Amsterdam and 2-1 in the return on a memorable night in Prague. Stanislav Vlcek scored both goals, and 37-year-old goalkeeper Martin Vaniak made a string of amazing saves in the second half.

Slavia were also doing well in the League, winning their first five games. Teplice were the only other team with a 100 per cent record. Their fifth-round game against Brno was postponed following the death of former coach Vlastislav Marecek from cancer. The 41-year-old had stepped down in 2006 as his condition worsened.

Ceske Budejovice and Mlada Boleslav both fired coaches after a run of poor results. Frantisek Straka replaced Frantisek Cipro at Budejovice, while Zdenek Scasny took over from Ludek Zajic at Boleslav.

Sam Beckwith

Horvath halt...the controversial Sparta midfielder tangles with Arsenal's Diaby

BULGARIA

Berbatov hits out

NATIONAL TEAM captain and forward Dimitar Berbatov turned on his team-mates after the 2-0 Euro 2008 qualifying defeat in Holland that left Bulgaria with only a slim chance of reaching the finals.

"We can't hope to win when we concede goals after such stupid mistakes," Berbatov said, referring to blunders by goalkeeper Dimitar Ivankov. "As captain I have the right to criticise. If we allow the same mistakes maybe we don't deserve to qualify for the European finals."

But coach Dimitar Penev felt Berbatov also deserved criticism, saying: "He missed good chances which he would have scored for Tottenham, so he has to take his share of the blame."

Pirin were the surprise league leaders after four straight wins. Beroe owner Nikolay Banev has sold his stake in the club after being barracked by the fans during the home 0-0 draw with Lokomotiv Plovdiv, the team's only point from their first three games.

Rumen Paytashev

BRAZIL

Ruthless Sao Paulo shove the rest aside

SAO PAULO are threatening to run away with the national championship, just as they did last year. After 25 of the 38 rounds, they had opened up a nine-point lead, conceded just seven goals and had won away against all the other leading sides, Cruzeiro, Vasco da Gama, Gremio, Santos and Botafogo.

It has hardly been thrilling stuff, though, and many have been shocked at the defensive and ruthless manner in which Sao Paulo have achieved their dominance. Coach Muricy Ramalho has based his strategy on the technical foul, getting his players to break up opposition attacks in midfield with cynical trips, pushes and shoves.

"The spectacle offered by Sao Paulo in the first half against Vasco was depressing," wrote Fernando Calazans in *O Globo* after the leaders' 2-0 win effectively knocked Vasco out of the title race. "They fell back into defence and played anti-football. Fouls, fouls and more fouls – an illicit, malicious, undignified scheme."

Contact sport...Sao Paulo's Leandro (centre) moves in to challenge Vasco da Gama's Andrade during the 2-0 win

Second-placed Cruzeiro have been a far more palatable proposition, scoring 57 goals to Sao Paulo's 38, but they had conceded more than five times as many, 38.

It has also been difficult to get excited about a competition in which the turnover of players is so high. There is no transfer window in Brazil. Instead, clubs can buy and sell players freely until September, two-thirds of the way through the competition. Also, with the contest running from April to December, there is a huge exodus around August when the European market closes, forcing teams to rebuild.

Alexandre Pato was the most notable departure this time. He left Internacional for Milan after only nine months in the first-team squad and still short of his 18th birthday. Internacional's only consolation was that arch-rivals Gremio also lost their brightest prospect, Lucas, to Liverpool.

Internacional have paid dearly, however, for disbanding the side that won the Libertadores Cup and Club World Cup last year. They failed to get beyond the group stage of this year's Libertadores and were languishing in mid-table in the Brazilian championship.

Abel Braga, who resigned after the Libertadores elimination, was back again four months later when his replacement, Alexandre Gallo, was fired.

Claudio Duarte quit struggling Juventude after only four matches and was replaced by Beto Almeida, the club's fourth coach of the year.

Brian Homewood

BOLIVIA

Aurora knock out Islas

Former Argentina keeper Luis Islas resigned as coach of Cochabamba-based club Aurora after coming to blows with compatriot defender Emiliano Capela during a training session. The fight began when Islas tried to intervene in an argument between Capela and another player.

Brian Homewood

PERU

Diego dumped

Alianza Lima, last year's overall champions, sacked Uruguayan coach Diego Aguirre after a series of poor results left them bottom of this year's closing championship. The low point was a 5-0 defeat by opening winners Universidad San Martin Porres. Aguirre was replaced by Chilean Miguel Angel Arrue, who is in his second spell.

Alianza have complained to FIFA about Peru midfielder Juan Carlos Marino, who joined them from Cienciano after the Copa America but left to sign for Spanish second division club Hercules Alicante a month later.

Brian Homewood

COLOMBIA

Big defeats spell the end

Uruguayan coach Martin Lasarte resigned at troubled Millonarios following consecutive heavy defeats. The club, who have won a record 13

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Fallen idol...Riquelme is out of favour at Villarreal but must play regular club football if he is to retain his Argentina place

ARGENTINA

Riquelme facing the chop

JUAN ROMAN RIQUELME'S international future is in doubt, despite a successful Copa America, after coach Alfio Basile warned players that they will not be selected for the upcoming World Cup qualifiers if not appearing for their clubs.

The playmaker recently returned to Villarreal after an impressive loan spell at Boca Juniors but is not part of coach Manuel Pellegrini's plans. The pair have not seen eye to eye for some time, a situation that prompted Riquelme's move to Boca in the first place.

The Buenos Aires club wanted to re-sign Riquelme, the hero of their Libertadores Cup triumph in June, for a second loan spell. But Villarreal told them they would consider only a permanent move, for £7million, and Boca could not afford it. Besides, Riquelme had baulked at a return since he would have lost out financially. He is earning £2.5m a year at Villarreal, with whom he has a contract until mid-2009. He also turned down moves to other clubs, including Newcastle and Atletico Madrid.

Osvaldo Ardiles has taken charge of promoted Huracan, one of his clubs as a player. He replaces Antonio Mohamed, who left citing as his reasons "the politics at the club and the poor state of the pitch, on which it was impossible to play good football".

Ardiles' flight from London had barely touched down when he was on the touchline for his first game, a 1-0 home defeat by Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata.

Eric Weil

domestic titles and were briefly one of the world's richest outfits in the 1940s, crashed 6-1 to Quindio and then lost 3-0 at home to Deportivo Pasto.

After the latter game, the players were whisked out of the El Campin stadium without even time for a shower because of fears the team bus would be attacked by angry fans.

Club president Juan Carlos Lopez also offered his resignation but it was rejected by the board. Argentinian Mario Vanemerak replaced Lasarte.

Brian Homewood

CANADA

Linford ousted

Colin Linford was forced to quit as president of the Canadian Soccer Association after 14 months at the helm following an internal power struggle.

Discontented board members said Linford unilaterally brought in former national basketball boss Fred Nykamp as the CSA's new chief executive and had strongly backed the appointment of Brazilian Rene Simoes to run the national team. Linford clearly lost the latter battle since former national team player Dale Mitchell was recently handed the job.

"It wasn't as if nobody knew what I wanted to do," Linford said. "I was elected unanimously and they all knew my agenda. I was shafted. If any youngster has the opportunity to play for another country, I suggest he takes it."

Canada drew their first two games under Mitchell, away to Iceland and home to Costa Rica, both 1-1.

Philippe Germain

MEXICO

Menotti relights career

CESAR LUIS MENOTTI, the chain-smoking coach who led Argentina to World Cup victory in 1978, has made a surprise return to the touchline at the age of 68. The Thin One has taken over at Tecos UAG, replacing Dario Franco, who was fired after the Guadalajara-based club took only one point from their first four league matches.

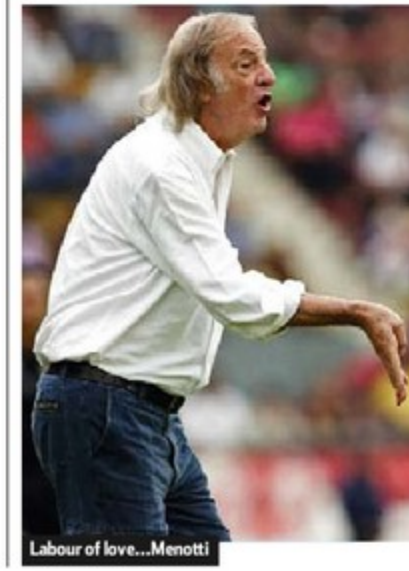
"I love this game," Menotti said. "Football has been to my life what a guitar or piano is to a musician."

The Argentinian had a distinctly discordant start, his charges losing 3-0 to fellow strugglers Puebla. But Tecos bounced back in their next game, beating Jaguares 2-1, a result that cost opposing coach Victor Vucetich his job.

Menotti was credited with revitalising Argentina during the 1970s, kicking out the ugly, destructive football the national team had been playing for several years.

However, he appeared to have lost his touch more recently. His previous stint was back home in Argentina at the start of 2005 when he lasted only nine matches with Independiente. Before that, he spent seven months at Sampdoria in 1997 and eight months at Independiente in 1999. His next job was in 2002, lasting five months at Rosario Central, where he began his playing career more than 40 years ago.

Brian Homewood


Labour of love...Menotti

JAPAN

Antlers head up

Welcome back...Mitsuo Ogasawara hit three goals in his first five league games after returning to Kashima Antlers

KASHIMA ANTLERS made their worst start to a league campaign in the spring with consecutive losses to Kawasaki Frontale and Gamba Osaka followed by three draws. But they had risen to third with 10 games remaining, just seven points behind Urawa Reds and six behind Gamba Osaka.

Midfielder Mitsuo Ogasawara has played a big part in the revival on his return from Italian side Messina, including hitting three goals in his first five games back in the J.League.

Antlers even had the opportunity to draw level on points with Gamba at the end of August but failed spectacularly, going down 5-1. They bounced straight back, though, with a 4-1 home win over Kawasaki Frontale.

"This is an interesting league. In the space of a single week, Frontale have beaten Gamba 4-1, Gamba beat us 5-1, and now we have beaten Frontale 4-1," said Antlers coach Oswaldo Oliveira. "I couldn't come down hard on my players for the Gamba result because I felt my own responsibility as manager."

Jubilo Iwata coach Adilson resigned after a 1-0 defeat by Shimizu S-Pulse in the Shizuoka derby. Reserve team boss Atsushi Uchiyama has stepped up to take the Brazilian's place. Yokohama FC, 10 points adrift at the foot of the table, dismissed their coach, Takuya Takagi. The former Japan striker led Yokohama to an unlikely second division championship triumph last season in his first managerial job.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

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CHINA

Petrovic in charge

Former Dalian Shide and Red Star Belgrade coach Vladimir Petrovic has been appointed national team coach on a one-year contract. The Serb, who won the league and cup double with Dalian in 2005, will be working closely with compatriot Ratomir Dujkovic, China's Olympic team boss.

Petrovic replaces Zhu Guanghu, who was axed after failing to guide China beyond the Asian Cup group stage.

Michael Church

ROUND-UP

ASIA

● MALAYSIA'S national coach Norizan Bakar has been replaced by B Sathianathan, who has just steered the Under-23 side to victory in the Merdeka Cup. Norizan was fired after Malaysia lost all their three group matches at the Asian Cup, which they co-hosted.

Kedah made it a domestic treble by thumping 10-man Perak 3-0 in the Malaysian Cup Final. Kedah also won the Super League and FA Cup.

● Former Saudi Arabia coach Eduardo Vingada has been appointed coach of JORDAN on a 16-month contract. Vingada won the Asian Cup with the Saudis in 1996.

● Jose Candinho has stepped down as coach of SAUDI ARABIA'S Al Ittihad, citing personal reasons. His replacement is Salem Halilhodzic.

● Binh Duong won the VIETNAMESE championship with four matches to spare after beating Binh Dinh 4-2.

● Iraq's Asian Cup-winning captain Younis Mahmoud scored two goals in extra-time to give QATAR'S Al Gharafa a 4-2 win over 10-man Al Sailiya in the Sheikh Jassim Cup Final.

● Hosts INDIA won the five-country Nehru Cup, N P Pradeep scoring the only goal in the Final against Syria.

● Abdysh-Ata beat Lokomotiv 2-1 to win the KYRGYZSTAN Cup for the first time.

● Central Coast Mariners were the only side to win their first three matches in the AUSTRALIAN A-League.

Lawrie McKinna's solid unit includes influential veterans Andre Gumprecht and Tony Vidmar, while Sasho Petrovski has taken on a new lease of life since his close-season move from Sydney FC.

The performances of defender Dean Heffernan and striker Nick Mrdja earned them national team call-ups.

Michael Church, Azam Mahmood & Paul Moon

Mid-celebration...Central United enjoy their Chatham Cup success

OCEANIA

● Central United deservedly won NEW ZEALAND'S Chatham Cup, seeing off Western Suburbs 10-9 on penalties. The Northern Regional League champions created more chances than their Central League counterparts, though neither side managed to score during normal or extra-time.

Central converted all their spot-kicks and won the trophy when Suburbs' Sam Peters put his effort over the bar.

It was Central's fourth success in 11 years in the country's principal knockout competition.

Paul Moon

Finals experience...Olsen was in charge of Norway at the 1994 and 1998 World Cups

IRAQ

Egil has landed

IRAQ HAVE turned to ex-Norway coach Egil Olsen to lead them into the World Cup qualifying campaign, just weeks after the team lifted the Asian Cup for the first time. The 65-year-old succeeds Brazilian Jorvan Vieira, who failed to reach agreement with the FA about a new deal after the continental success.

Olsen, who led Norway at the 1994 and 1998 World Cups, has signed a three-year contract. His first competitive game will be a World Cup qualifier against Pakistan on October 8. Iraq have qualified for the finals only once before, in 1986, and the Norwegian's great challenge is to create a unified squad capable of reaching South Africa from players based throughout the Middle East. Few players are still with clubs in their war-torn homeland.

Michael Church

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP

Egypt made to wait

AS ANOTHER tranche of countries booked their places at next year's African Nations Cup finals, defending champions Egypt were still not sure of making it after being held to a goalless draw away to Burundi.

The Pharaohs, who produced a drab performance in Bujumbura, need a point from their final qualifier, at home to Botswana in mid-October, to book their passage to Ghana. Botswana would qualify if they won and Burundi failed to win away to Mauritania in the other Group 2 tie.

There are two other places still up for grabs. Mali, Togo and Benin are all in contention to take top spot in Group 9, and their final round of matches (Togo v Mali, Sierra Leone v Benin), which was postponed until mid-October, will also determine which country takes the last remaining finals berth reserved for the three best runners-up from the 12 groups.

World Cup hosts South Africa took one of those best runners-up spots after suffering a humiliating 3-1 home defeat to Zambia, which allowed the Zambians to top Group 11. An opening 20 minutes of defensive madness gifted Chris Katongo a hat-trick. Benni McCarthy, playing his first international in 18 months, pulled one back.

It was a similar story in Group 4, with Sudan leapfrogging Tunisia, who took another of the best runners-up spots, by beating their rivals 3-2 in Omdurman.

Namibia had a fairytale finish, topping Group 10 by beating Ethiopia 3-2 away – the winner coming in the last minute – while DR Congo and Libya, who had started the day ahead of them, drew 1-1 in Kinshasa.

Guinea, Ivory Coast and Senegal were the other sides to make it through after the September qualifiers. Angola, Cameroon, Morocco and Nigeria had already booked their places in June.

Mark Gleeson

Race for the top...Sudan's Abdalla and Al-Dawawi of Tunisia go shoulder to shoulder

Heads up...Kouakou of ASEC tussles with Al Ahly's Gomaa

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

All's well for Al Ahly

DEFENDING CHAMPIONS Al Ahly held their nerve after losing two group games in a row to reach the Champions League semi-finals. The Cairo club, aiming for an unprecedented third consecutive triumph in Africa's top club competition, beat Ivorians ASEC Abidjan 2-0 at home in their final game to top Group B.

Al Ahly now face Al Ittihad of Libya, who made sure of runners-up spot in Group A by beating group winners Etoile Sahel of Tunisia 2-0 at home.

Etoile face Sudan's Al Hilal, who drew 1-1 with another Tunisian side, Esperance, to finish two points behind Al Ahly. Al Hilal are the surprise package of this year's event, having never reached the group stage before.

Mark Gleeson

ROUND-UP

- JS Talangai won the Cup in CONGO with a 2-0 defeat of CARA Brazzaville.
- Akbar Patel has been appointed MAURITIUS coach for the third time.
- ALGERIAN champions Entente Setif have appointed Swiss coach Charles Roesselli.
- ASC Mauritel won the Cup in MAURITANIA, beating National Guard 3-2 on penalties.
- In MOROCCO, Frenchman Jean-Yves Chay is the new coach of Raja Casablanca, while Bulgarian Plamen Markov is now in charge at city rivals Wydad.
- Former ANGOLAN champions Sagrada Esperanca have named Brazilian coach Artur Bernardes as the replacement for Albano Cesar.
- The start of NIGERIA'S league campaign was delayed because of a dispute about whether the League or the FA should be in charge of the referees.
- ZAMBIAN champions Zanaco have fired coach Fighton Simukonda after an 11-match winless run.
- AS Douanes retained the league title in SENEGAL, going undefeated through the play-off stage.
- Idriss Konate scored twice as RC Bobo Dioulasso won the BURKINA FASO Cup, beating US Ouagadougou 2-1.
- Stade Malien won the league title in MALI.

Mark Gleeson

Games players...Martyn Clarke (back row, fifth from left) lines up with the rest of the Falklands squad in the Shetland Islands in 2005

Falklands affair

MARTYN CLARKE, the Falklander who created a furore on the islands 11 years ago by going to play in Argentina, is hoping to overcome a spate of injuries and other off-field problems and make a return to the national team.

As a 16-year-old, Clarke went to Buenos Aires for a trial with Boca Juniors. During his time there, he was dragged on to talk shows and asked his views about the UK's ownership of the Falkland Islands and the 1982 invasion by Argentina. The Boca trial did not work out, and although he played for lower league side El Porvenir, he returned home a few months later because of a lack of money. Clarke received a frosty reception from some Falklanders but nevertheless went on the national team's first overseas tour, to Chile, the following year.

He quit the South Atlantic in 2002, for the United States, where he had a trial with the Connecticut Wolves team. However, that was curtailed after he suffered injury problems, and he moved on to England, first to Essex then Wetherby in Yorkshire, where he currently works in the building industry.

Clarke played for the Falklands at the 2005 Island Games in the Shetlands, scoring two of the team's three goals in the group stage, one of them in a shock 2-1 win against the Estonian island of Saaremaa. But Clarke broke down injured, and the Falklands exited at the group stage anyway.

No show

The team did not appear at this year's Island Games in Rhodes because of the cost and apprehension about the extreme heat they would face. But even if they had travelled, Clarke would almost certainly not have been with the squad. He has struggled to get fit ever since the Shetland Games, although he is playing five-a-side in Yorkshire and looking for an 11-side team. But also he does not get on with current Falklands manager Jimmy Curtis. "We had a fight before I left the Falklands," says Clarke, whose uncle, Chris Clarke, had been manager for the Shetlands campaign.

Clarke has no regrets about his trip to Argentina. He recalls: "On my first night there, I went out for a pizza with Maradona and used his phone to call my mum. He was one of the best footballers in the world and that was pretty cool." Screenwriters Dominic Morgan and Matt Harvey wrote a script about Clarke's story, and actor Martin Compston, a former trainee with Scottish lower division side Morton, agreed to play Clarke, but the project is stuck in development.

As for football in the Falklands, there is a four-team league but the islands' federation has never tried to enter the South American confederation because of inevitable Argentinian objections.

Apart from the Island Games, the national team's only matches are against armed forces sides or teams drawn from the crew of visiting ships. Earlier this year, the Falklands beat HMS Edinburgh 5-4, with former Lincoln City manager and Falklands War veteran Phil Stant guesting for the hosts.

General manager Patrick Watts says: "The plan for the national team now is to compete in the 2009 Island Games in Aland [in the Baltic]." Whether Clarke will be part of the squad is open to doubt.

Steve Menary

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RESULTS OCTOBER 2007

INTERNATIONALS

EURO 2008 QUALIFIERS

Group A

Sep 8 - Lisbon
Portugal 2 (Maniche 50, Cristiano Ronaldo 73)
Poland 2 (Lewandowski 44, Krzynowek 88)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 62,000. **Ref:** Rosetti (Ita)
Portugal: Ricardo - Bosingwa, Bruno Alves, Fernando Meira, Caneira (Miguel 13), Cristiano Ronaldo, Maniche, Petit, Deco, Simao (Joao Moutinho 81), Nuno Gomes (Quaresma 69).
Poland: Boruc - Wasilewski, Jop, Michal Zewlakow, Bronowicki (Golanski 55), Blaszczykowski, Lewandowski, Krzynowek, Dudka, Smolarek (Lobodzinski 74), Zurawski (Matusiak 56).

Sep 8 - Belgrade
Serbia 0
Finland 0
Att: 15,000. **Ref:** Braamhaar (Hol)
Serbia: Stojkovic - Rukavina, Ivanovic, Dragutinovic, D Tosic (Z Tosic 53), N Kovacevic, Kuzmanovic, Stankovic, Jankovic (Jovanovic 54), Krasic, Lazovic (Zigic 62).
Finland: Jaaskelainen - Pasanen, Hyypia, Tihinen, Kuivasto, Nurmela, Tainio, Heikkinen, A Eremenko (Forssell 74), Sjolund, Johansson (Wiss 78).

Sep 12 - Helsinki
Finland 0
Poland 0
Att: 34,088. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
Finland: Jaaskelainen - Kuivasto, Hyypia, Tihinen, Pasanen, Sjolund, Heikkinen (Wiss 90), Tainio, Kolkka, A Eremenko, Johansson (Forssell 72).
Poland: Boruc - Golanski, Jop, Michal Zewlakow (Saganowski 65), Blaszczykowski, Dudka, Sobolewski, Lewandowski, Smolarek (Zurawski 80), Krzynowek, Rasiak.

Sep 12 - Almaty
Kazakhstan 2 (Byakov 39, Smakov pen 77)
Belgium 2 (Geraerts 13, Mirallas 24)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Tudor (Rom)
Kazakhstan: Loria - Y Azovskiy (Lyapkin 66), Smakov, Irismetov, Kuchma, Larin (Suyumagambetov 73), Skorykh, Karpovitch, Zhumaskaliyev, Ostapenko, Byakov.
Belgium: Stijnen - Simons, Kompany, Hoefkens, Vermaelen, Goor (M Mpenza 84), Fellaini, Geraerts (Haroun 77), Defour, Mirallas (Vertonghen 63), Dembele.

Sep 12 - Lisbon
Portugal 1 (Simao 11)
Serbia 1 (Ivanovic 88)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 38,000. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Portugal: Ricardo - Paulo Ferreira, Fernando Meira, Bruno Alves, Petit, Bosingwa, Deco (Joao Moutinho 77), Maniche (Raul Meireles 83), Cristiano Ronaldo, Nuno Gomes (Quaresma 65), Simao.
Serbia: Stojkovic - Rukavina, Dragutinovic, Vidic, Ivanovic, Z Tosic (Zigic 61), Stankovic, N Kovacevic, Krasic (Pantelic 61), Kuzmanovic (Duljaj 71), Jovanovic. *Sent off: Dragutinovic 90min.*

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	11	6	3	2	17	9	21
Finland	11	5	4	2	11	6	19
Portugal	10	4	5	1	19	9	17
Serbia	10	4	4	2	13	8	16
Belgium	10	3	2	5	10	14	11
Armenia*	8	2	2	4	4	8	8
Kazakhstan	10	1	4	5	8	15	7
Azerbaijan*	8	1	2	5	4	17	5

Remaining games
13.10.07 Armenia-Serbia
13.10.07 Azerbaijan-Portugal
13.10.07 Belgium-Finland
13.10.07 Poland-Kazakhstan
17.10.07 Azerbaijan-Serbia
17.10.07 Belgium-Armenia
17.10.07 Kazakhstan-Portugal
17.11.07 Finland-Azerbaijan
17.11.07 Poland-Belgium
17.11.07 Portugal-Armenia
17.11.07 Serbia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Armenia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Azerbaijan-Belgium
21.11.07 Portugal-Finland
21.11.07 Serbia-Poland

**Both ties between Armenia and Azerbaijan were cancelled by UEFA because the two associations could not agree on venues. No points were awarded to either country*

Group B

Sep 8 - Tbilisi
Georgia 1 (Siradze 89)
Ukraine 1 (Shelaiev 9)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 26,500. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Georgia: Lomaia - Ghvinianidze, Kaladze, Asatiani, Salukvadze, Tskitishvili, Menteshashvili (Tatanashvili 79), Jakobia (Siradze 62), Demetradze, A Iashvili (Kenia 62), Martsvaladze.
Ukraine: Shovkovskyi - Yezerskyi, Rusol, Kucher, Tymoshchuk, Rotan (Gay 80), Nazarenko, Husiev, Shelaiev (Gladkyy 90), Shevchenko, Voronin (Kalinichenko 72).

Sep 8 - Milan
Italy 0
France 0
Att: 80,000. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Italy: Buffon - Oddo, Cannavaro, Barzagli, Zambrotta, De Rossi, Gattuso, Pirlo, Camoranesi (Perrotta 58), Del Piero (Di Natale 83), Inzaghi (Lucarelli 65).
France: Landreau - Diarra, Thuram, Escude, Abidal, Ribery (Toulalan 86), Makelele, Vieira, Malouda, Henry, Anelka.

Sep 8 - Glasgow
Scotland 3 (Boyd 31, McManus 77, McFadden 83)
Lithuania 1 (Danilevicius pen 61)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 51,349. **Ref:** Skomina (Slv)
Scotland: Gordon - Hutton, Weir, McManus, McEveley, Teale (McFadden 69), Brown, Fletcher, McCulloch (Maloney 76), Boyd, O'Connor (Beattie 76).
Lithuania: Karcemarskas - Stankevicius (Jankauskas 56), Skerla, Zvirgzdauskas, Klimavicius, Semberas, Kalonas, D Cesnauskis, Morinas (Mikoliunas 47), Danilevicius, Velicka (Ksanavicius 47).

Sep 12 - Paris
France 0
Scotland 1 (McFadden 64)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
France: Landreau - L Diarra, Thuram, Escude, Abidal (Benzema 77), Ribery, Vieira (Nasri 69), Makelele, Malouda, Trezeguet, Anelka.
Scotland: Gordon - Hutton, McManus, Weir, G Alexander, McCulloch, Ferguson, Fletcher (Pearson 26), Brown, Hartley, McFadden (O'Connor 76).

Sep 12 - Kaunas
Lithuania 2 (Jankauskas 8, Danilevicius 53)
Faroe Islands 1 (R Jacobsen 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Georgiev (Bul)
Lithuania: Karcemarskas - Semberas, Klimavicius, Skerla, Alunderis, Ivaskevicius, Mikoliunas (Velicka 32), D Cesnauskis (Kalonas 31), Ksanavicius, Jankauskas (Kucys 86), Danilevicius.
Faroe Islands: Mikkelsen - Benjaminsen, Atli Danielsen, Holst (H Samuelsen 74), J Jacobsen, Thomassen, S Samuelsen, C Jacobsen (av Flotum 84), S Olsen (P Hansen 63), a Borg, R Jacobsen.

Sep 12 - Kiev
Ukraine 1 (Shevchenko 71)
Italy 2 (Di Natale 41, 77)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 41,500. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Ukraine: Shovkovskyi - Kucher, Yezerskyi, Rusol, Shelaiev (Gladkyy 69), Husiev (Milevskyi 88), Kalinichenko (Voronin 60), Tymoshchuk, Gay, Nazarenko, Shevchenko.
Italy: Buffon - Panucci, Cannavaro, Barzagli, Zambrotta, Camoranesi (Oddo 78), Ambrosini, Pirlo, Perrotta (Aquilani 68), Iaquinta, Di Natale.

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Scotland	9	7	0	2	17	7	21
Italy	9	6	2	1	15	7	20
France	9	6	1	2	15	3	19
Ukraine	8	4	1	3	10	9	13
Lithuania	9	3	1	5	7	11	10
Georgia	9	2	1	6	14	15	7
Faroe Islands	9	0	0	9	3	29	0

Remaining games
13.10.07 Faroe Islands-France
13.10.07 Italy-Georgia
13.10.07 Scotland-Ukraine
17.10.07 France-Lithuania
17.10.07 Georgia-Scotland
17.10.07 Ukraine-Faroe Islands
17.11.07 Lithuania-Ukraine
17.11.07 Scotland-Italy
21.11.07 Georgia-Lithuania
21.11.07 Italy-Faroe Islands
21.11.07 Ukraine-France

Group C

Sep 8 - Szekesfehervar
Hungary 1 (Gera pen 39)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,877. **Ref:** Trefoloni (Ita)
Hungary: Fulop - Vanczak, Vasko, Juhasz, Szelesi, Vass, Tozser, Gera, Hajnal (Csizmadia 72), Dzsudzsak (Halmosi 90), Feczesin (Filkor 89).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Guso - Berberovic, Bajic, Radeljic, Maletic (Bozic 79), Rahimic, Misimovic, Hrgovic (Custovic 84), Muslimovic, Ibisevic (Dzeko 67), Blatnjak.

Sep 8 - Valletta
Malta 2 (Said 41, Schembri 76)
Turkey 2 (Halil Altintop 45, Servet 78)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Messner (Aut)
Malta: Haber - Azzopardi, Said, Dimech, Briffa (Sammut 88), Scicluna, G Agius, Pace, Michael Mifsud, Woods (Mallia 83), Schembri (Scerri 90).
Turkey: Hakan Arikan - Servet, Ibrahim Toroman, Hamit Altintop, Ibrahim Uzulmez, Sabri (Gokdeniz 52), Emre Belozoglu, Arda (Ayhan 30), Tuncay (Deniz 66), Halil Altintop, Hakan Sukur.

Sep 8 - Chisinau
Moldova 0
Norway 1 (Iversen 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Malek (Pol)
Moldova: Pascenco - Olexici (Rogaciov 78), Rebeja, Epureanu, Lascencov, Bordian, Gatcan, Zmeu (Suvorov 65), Comleonoc, Bugaev, Frunza.
Norway: Opdal - Storbaek, Waehler (Riseth 66), Hangeland, J A Riise, B H Riise, Andresen, Grindheim, Iversen (Helstad 68), Carew, Gamst Pedersen.

Sep 12 - Sarajevo
Bosnia-Herzegovina 0
Moldova 1 (Bugaev 22)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Hyytia (Fin)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Guso - Berberovic, Bajic, Nadarevic, Radeljic (Ibisevic 46), Rahimic, Maletic (Custovic 78), Zeba (Damjanovic 47), Blatnjak, Muslimovic, Dzeko.
Moldova: Calancea - Epureanu, Lascencov, Golovatenco, Rebeja, Comleonoc (Namasco 63), Corneencov, Gatcan (Josan 85), Bordian, Bugaev, Doros (Rogaciov 73).

Sep 12 - Oslo
Norway 2 (Carew 15, J A Riise 39)
Greece 2 (Kyrgiakos 7, 30)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 24,080. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Norway: Opdal - Storbaek, Hagen, Hangeland, J A Riise, Andresen, B H Riise (Kippe 90), Solli (Helstad 70), Carew, Iversen (Riseth 80), Gamst Pedersen.
Greece: Chalkias - Seitaridis (Antzas 64), Patsatzoglou, Kyrgiakos, Dellas, Basinas (Samaras 76), Karagounis, Torosidis, Katsouranis, Salpingidis (Limberopoulos 46), Gekas.

Sep 12 - Istanbul
Turkey 3 (Gokhan Unal 68, Mehmet Aurelio 72, Halil Altintop 90)
Hungary 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 28,020. **Ref:** Dougal (Sco)
Turkey: Hakan Arikan - Emre Asik, Hamit Altintop, Servet, Ibrahim Uzulmez, Mehmet Aurelio, Gokdeniz (Halil Altintop 61), Ayhan (Serdar 67), Tuncay, Gokhan Unal, Nihat (Emre Belozoglu 46).
Hungary: Fulop (Balogh 71) - Juhasz, Szelesi, Vanczak, Csizmadia, Vasko, Vass, Gera, Dzsudzsak (Halmosi 82), Hajnal, Priskin (B Toth 66).
Sent off: Gera 63min.

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Greece	8	6	1	1	14	7	19
Norway	9	5	2	2	20	8	17
Turkey	8	5	2	1	21	8	17
Bosnia-Herz	9	4	1	4	14	16	13
Hungary	9	3	0	6	8	17	9
Malta	8	1	2	5	7	17	5
Moldova	9	1	2	6	5	16	5

Remaining games
13.10.07 Greece-Bosnia-Herz
13.10.07 Hungary-Malta
13.10.07 Moldova-Turkey
17.10.07 Bosnia-Herz-Norway
17.10.07 Malta-Moldova
17.10.07 Turkey-Greece
17.11.07 Greece-Malta
17.11.07 Moldova-Hungary
17.11.07 Norway-Turkey
21.11.07 Hungary-Greece
21.11.07 Malta-Norway
21.11.07 Turkey-Bosnia-Herz

Group D

Sep 8 - Serravalle
San Marino 0
Czech Republic 3 (Rosicky 33, Jankulovski 75, Koller 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,412. **Ref:** Filipovic (Ser)
San Marino: A Simoncini - C Valentini, Vannucci, D Simoncini, Della Valle, G Bollini (Mariotti 85), Bugli (Vitaioli 67), F Bollini (Andreini 58), Manuel Marani, Selva, Bonini. *Sent off: Della Valle 64min.*
Czech Republic: P Cech - Ujfalusi, Rozehnal, Kovac, Jankulovski, Galasek (Plasil 82), Rosicky, Jarolim (Polak 69), Kulic (Vlicek 56), Fenin, Koller.

Sep 8 - Bratislava
Slovakia 2 (Klimpl 37, Cech 90)
Republic of Ireland 2 (Ireland 7, K Doyle 57)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 12,360. **Ref:** Farina (Ita)
Slovakia: Senecky - Gresko, Cech, Durica, Klimpl, Krajcik, Hamsik, Sapara (Sebo 71), Mintal, Holosko, Sestak (Obzera 65).
Rep Ireland: Given - O'Shea, Kelly, McShane, Dunne, Carsley, McGeady (Gibson 61), Ireland (Douglas 76), Kilbane, K Doyle (Murphy 89), Keane.

Sep 8 - Cardiff
Wales 0
Germany 2 (Klose 5, 60)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Wales: Hennessey - Ricketts, Gabbidon, J Collins, Nyatanga, Ledley (Earnshaw 46), Bale, Koumas (Fletcher 67), Robinson, S Davies (Crofts 79), Eastwood.
Germany: Lehmann - A Friedrich, Mertesacker, Metzelder, Pander (Trochowski 46), Hilbert, Hitzlsperger, Schweinsteiger, Jansen, Kuranyi (Podolski 72), Klose (Helmes 87).

Sep 12 - Nicosia
Cyprus 3 (Makrides 15, Aloneftis 41, 90)
San Marino 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 600. **Ref:** Kulbakov (Bls)
Cyprus: Georgallides - Charalambous (Garpozis 65), Okkarides, Christou, Michael, Ella (Theodotou 76), Makrides, M Nicolaou, Okkas (Yiasoumi 46), Constantinou, Aloneftis.
San Marino: F Valentini - C Valentini, Vannucci, Vitaioli, Albani (Benedettini 81), F Bollini, Andreini, Bugli, Manuel Marani (Nanni 87), Selva, Bonini (Mariotti 73).

Sep 12 - Prague
Czech Republic 1 (Jankulovski 15)
Republic of Ireland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 16,648. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Czech Republic: P Cech - Ujfalusi, Rozehnal, Kovac, Jankulovski, Sionko (Vlicek 74), Galasek (Sivok 46), Rosicky, Polak, Plasil, Baros (Jarolim 89).
Rep Ireland: Given - Kelly, McShane, Dunne, O'Shea (Hunt 38), McGeady (Long 62), Carsley (Keogh 82), A Reid, Kilbane, K Doyle, Keane.
Sent off: Hunt 61min.

Sep 12 - Trnava
Slovakia 2 (Mintal 12, 57)
Wales 5 (Eastwood 22, Bellamy 34, 41, Durica og 78, S Davies 90)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 5,486. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Slovakia: Senecky - Gresko (Zofcak 64), Klimpl, Durica, Cech, Hamsik, Petras, Sapara, Mintal, Sestak (Obzera 46), Holosko.
Wales: Hennessey - Ricketts, Gabbidon, Morgan, J Collins, Bale, S Davies, Robinson, Ledley (Vaughan 85), Bellamy, Eastwood (Fletcher 73).

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	8	7	1	0	31	4	22
Czech Rep	9	6	2	1	19	4	20
Rep Ireland	9	4	2	3	14	11	14
Slovakia	9	3	1	5	20	20	10
Wales	8	3	1	4	13	13	10
Cyprus	8	3	1	4	13	16	10
San Marino	9	0	0	9	1	43	0

Remaining games
13.10.07 Cyprus-Wales
13.10.07 Rep Ireland-Germany
13.10.07 Slovakia-San Marino
17.10.07 Germany-Czech Republic
17.10.07 Rep Ireland-Cyprus
17.10.07 San Marino-Wales
17.11.07 Czech Republic-Slovakia
17.11.07 Germany-Cyprus
17.11.07 Wales-Rep Ireland
21.11.07 Cyprus-Czech Republic
21.11.07 Germany-Wales
21.11.07 San Marino-Slovakia

Group E

Sep 8 - Zagreb
Croatia 2 (Eduardo 39, 45)
Estonia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Laperriere (Swi)
Croatia: Pletikosa - Simic, Simunic, R Kovac, Corluka, N Kovac, Srna (Babic 82), Modric, Kranjcar (Rakitic 60), Petric (Olic 70), Eduardo.
Estonia: Londak - Allas, Stepanov, Piiroja, U Rooba (Anniste 84), Rahn, Dmitrijev, Kruglov, Lindpere (Reim 90), Kink (Saag 80), Oper.

Sep 8 - London
England 3 (Wright-Phillips 20, Owen 49, Richards 66)
Israel 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 85,372. **Ref:** Vink (Hol)
England: Robinson - Richards, Ferdinand, Terry, A Cole, Wright-Phillips (Bentley 83), Gerrard (P Neville 71), Barry, J Cole, Heskey (A Johnson 71), Owen.
Israel: Awat - Shpungin, Ben Haim, Gershon, Ziv, Benayoun, Badir, Benado (Golan 57), Tal, Katan (Zandberg 73), Itzhaki (Tamuz 46).

Sep 8 - Moscow
Russia 3 (V Berezutsky 8, Arshavin 84, Kerzhakov 88)
Macedonia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 26,000. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Russia: Gabulov - V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, A Berezutsky, V Bystrov (Anyukov 89), Semshov, Zyrianov, Bilyaletdinov, Arshavin, Pavlyuchenko (Kerzhakov 66), Sychev (Malafeev 70).
Sent off: Gabulov 70min.
Macedonia: Milosevski - Popov, Lazarevski, Sedloski, I Mitreski, A Mitreski (Trajanov 46), Sumulikoski, Tasevski, Vasoski (Toleski 88), Pandev, Stojkov (Maznov 46).

Sep 12 - Andorra La Vella
Andorra 0
Croatia 6 (Srna 34, Petric 38, 44, Kranjcar 49, Eduardo 55, Rakitic 64)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Thual (Fra)
Andorra: Koldo - A Lima, Txema, Sonejee, Ayala, Sivera (Xavi Andorra 59), G Garcia, Ruiz (Somoza 82), Jimenez, Silva (Moreno 57), Vieira.
Sent off: G Garcia 77min.
Croatia: Runje - Srna, R Kovac, Corluka, Knezevic, Kranjcar, Modric (Balaban 46), J Leko, Babic, Petric (Pranjic 46), Eduardo (Rakitic 62).

Sep 12 - London
England 3 (Owen 7, 31, Ferdinand 84)
Russia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 86,106. **Ref:** Hansson (Swe)
England: Robinson - Richards, Ferdinand, Terry, A Cole, Wright-Phillips, Barry, Gerrard, J Cole (P Neville 88), Heskey (Crouch 80), Owen (Downing 90).
Russia: Malafeev - V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, A Berezutsky, Anyukov (Kerzhakov 80), Bilyaletdinov, Zhirkov, Semshov (V Bystrov 40), Sychev (Pavlyuchenko 63), Arshavin, Zyrianov.

Sep 12 - Skopje
Macedonia 1 (Maznov 30)
Estonia 1 (Piiroja 17)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Trattou (Cyp)
Macedonia: Milosevski - Lazarevski, Sedloski, Noveski, Vasoski, Grozdanovski, Trajanov (Polozani 46), Sumulikoski, Maznov, Tasevski, Stojkov (Toleski 81).
Estonia: Londak - Jaager, Stepanov, Piiroja, Kruglov, Rahn (Reim 62), Dmitrijev, Klavan, Lindpere, Oper (Anniste 90), Saag (Kink 79).

GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	9	7	2	0	24	4	23
England	9	6	2	1	18	2	20
Russia	9	5	3	1	14	4	18
Israel	9	5	2	2	17	10	17
Macedonia	9	2	2	5	7	11	8
Estonia	10	1	1	8	3	18	4
Andorra	9	0	0	9	2	36	0

Remaining games
13.10.07 England-Estonia
17.10.07 Croatia-Israel
17.10.07 Macedonia-Andorra
17.10.07 Russia-England
17.11.07 Andorra-Estonia
17.11.07 Israel-Russia
17.11.07 Macedonia-Croatia
21.11.07 Andorra-Russia
21.11.07 England-Croatia
21.11.07 Israel-Macedonia

Group F

Sep 8 - Reykjavik
Iceland 1 (Hallfredsson 40)
Spain 1 (Iniesta 86)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,783. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Iceland: Arason - K O Sigurdsson, R Sigurdsson, Ingimarsson, Hreidarsson, Steinsson, Vidarsson (Skulason 69), J K Gudjonsson (Adalsteinsson 79), Hallfredsson, Arnason, Thorvaldsson (Bjornsson 88).
Spain: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Marchena, Juanito, Pernia (Albelda 26), Joaquin (Luis Garcia 69), Xabi Alonso, Xavi, Silva, Fernando Torres (Iniesta 57), Villa. *Sent off: Xabi Alonso 20min.*

Sep 8 - Riga
Latvia 1 (Baird og 56)
Northern Ireland 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,500. **Ref:** Proenca (Por)
Latvia: Vanins - Zirnis, Gorkss, Klava, Ivanovs, Bleidelis, Laizans, Astafjevs, Rubins, Verpakovskis (Blanks 90), Karlsons (Rimkus 72).
Northern Ireland: Taylor - Baird, Duff, Evans, McCartney, Gillespie, Clingan, Davis, Elliott (Brunt 66), Healy, Lafferty (Feeney 72).

Sep 8 - Stockholm
Sweden 0
Denmark 0
Att: 33,082. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Bel)
Sweden: Isaksson - M Nilsson, Mellberg, P Hansson, Edman, Alexandersson, Linderoth, A Svensson (Kallstrom 69), Wilhelmsson (Bakircioglu 57), Ibrahimovic (Prica 89), Elmander.
Denmark: T Sorensen - Andreasen (Lovenkrands 81), Laursen, Agger, N Jensen, Helveg, D Jensen, Rommedahl, Kahlenberg (Bendtner 54), Tomasson (Gravgaard 90), Gronkjaer.

Sep 12 - Aarhus
Denmark 4 (Nordstrand 3, 36, Laursen 12, Tomasson 18)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 20,005. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)
Denmark: T Sorensen - Laursen, Agger (Gravgaard 28), N Jensen, Helveg, Andreasen, Gronkjaer (Kahlenberg 46), Nordstrand, Tomasson (Lovenkrands 68), Rommedahl, Hansen.
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Telser, Martin Stocklasa, Ritzberger (T Beck 46), Oehri (D Frick 46), R Buchel, F Burgmeier, D'Elia, Rohrer, Polverino, M Frick (R Beck 84).

Sep 12 - Reykjavik
Iceland 2 (Bjornsson 6, Gillespie og 90)
Northern Ireland 1 (Healy pen 72)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 7,727. **Ref:** Baskakov (Rus)
Iceland: Arason - K O Sigurdsson, R Sigurdsson, Ingimarsson, Hreidarsson, Arnason (Asgeirsson 88), Vidarsson, Steinsson, Hallfredsson, Thorvaldsson (Skulason 79), Bjornsson (E Gudjohnsen 53).
Northern Ireland: Taylor - Baird, Duff, Evans, McCartney, Gillespie, Clingan, Davis (McCann 79), Brunt (Jones 83), Healy, Feeney.

Sep 12 - Oviedo
Spain 2 (Xavi 13, Fernando Torres 86)
Latvia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Yefet (Isr)
Spain: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Marchena, Juanito, Pernia, Joaquin (Angulo 79), Albelda, Xavi, Silva (Fabregas 70), Fernando Torres, Villa (Iniesta 50).
Latvia: Vanins - Zirnis, Klava, Gorkss, Ivanovs, Bleidelis, Astafjevs, Laizans, Rubins, Karlsons (Pahars 64), Verpakovskis (Blanks 90).

GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	8	6	1	1	17	4	19
Spain	9	6	1	2	16	7	19
N Ireland	9	5	1	3	14	11	16
Denmark	8	4	2	2	13	5	14
Iceland	9	2	2	5	8	17	8
Latvia	8	2	0	6	5	9	6
Liechtenstein	9	1	1	7	5	25	4

Remaining games
13.10.07 Denmark-Spain
13.10.07 Iceland-Latvia
13.10.07 Liechtenstein-Sweden
17.10.07 Denmark-Latvia
17.10.07 Liechtenstein-Iceland
17.10.07 Sweden-Northern Ireland
17.11.07 Latvia-Liechtenstein
17.11.07 Northern Ireland-Denmark
17.11.07 Spain-Sweden
21.11.07 Denmark-Iceland
21.11.07 Spain-Northern Ireland
21.11.07 Sweden-Latvia

Group G

Sep 8 - Minsk
Belarus 1 (Romaschenko 20)
Romania 3 (Mutu 16, pen 77, Dica 42)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 19,320. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Belarus: Khomutovski - Korytko, Radkov, Plaskonny, Tigorev, Kalachev (Skvernluk 77), Romaschenko, A Hleb, Stasevich, Kornilenko, Rodionov (Vasilyuk 61).
Romania: Lobont - Rat, Chivu, Golan, Marin, Codrea (Trica 90), Ovidiu, Nicolita, Dica (Munteanu 67), Mutu, Sergiu Radu (F Petre 56).

Sep 8 - Amsterdam
Holland 2 (Sneijder 22, Van Nistelrooy 58)
Bulgaria 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo (Spa)
Holland: Van der Sar - Melchiot (Boulahrouz 57), Mathijsen, Bouma, Van Bronckhorst, Heitinga, Sneijder (Seedorf 73), De Zeeuw (De Jong 81), Babel, Van Nistelrooy, Van Persie.
Bulgaria: Ivankov - Lucio Wagner (Yankov 78), Kishishev, Tunchev, Tomasic, Angelov, Peev (Popov 60), M Petrov, S Petrov, Telkiyski (Dimitrov 68), Berbatov.

Sep 8 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Slovenia 3 (Lavric 7, 47, Novakovic 37)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 2,012. **Ref:** Berezka (Ukr)
Luxembourg: Joubert - Bigard, Hoffmann, Strasser, Peiffer (Da Mota 52), Lombardelli (Payal 46), Ferreira, Bettmer, Mutsch, Peters, Huss (Kitenge 63).
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Brecko, Morec, Zlogar (Cipot 82), Kokot, Kirm (Komac 64), Koren, Stevanovic, Vrsic (Mihelic 78), Novakovic, Lavric.

Sep 12 - Tirana
Albania 0
Holland 1 (Van Nistelrooy 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,600. **Ref:** Riley (Eng)
Albania: Beqaj - Dalliku, Dede, Curri, Vangjeli, Duro (Haxhi 69), Lala, Cana, Mukaj, Bogdani (Bulku 83), Kapllani (Bushi 46). *Sent off: Cana 87min.*
Holland: Van der Sar - Melchiot, Mathijsen, Bouma, Ooijer, De Zeeuw (Van der Vaart 49), Sneijder, Van Bronckhorst, Babel, Van Nistelrooy, Van Persie.

Sep 12 - Sofia
Bulgaria 3 (Berbatov 27, 28, M Petrov pen 54)
Luxembourg 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Demirlek (Tur)
Bulgaria: G Petkov - Tunchev, Tomasic, Zanev, Angelov, Popov (Kouchev 74), Kishishev, S Petrov (Yankov 60), Dimitrov, Berbatov, M Petrov (Yovov 66).
Luxembourg: Joubert - Bigard, Kintziger, Hoffmann, Peiffer (Collette 46), Strasser, Peters, Bettmer (Da Mota 83), Remy, Mutsch, Huss (Payal 46).

Sep 12 - Celje
Slovenia 1 (Lavric pen 3)
Belarus 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Banari (Mol)
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Ilic (Brecko 82), Jokic, Morec, Cipot, Koren, Kirm, Stevanovic (Zinko 75), Birsa, Novakovic, Lavric.
Belarus: Gaev - Tigorev, Radkov, Plaskonny, Kalachev, Stasevich, Romaschenko, A Hleb, Kornilenko (Rodionov 46), Korytko (Kashevski 90), Bliznyuk (Filipenko 74). *Sent off: Radkov 70min.*

GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	8	6	2	0	17	5	20
Holland	8	6	2	0	11	2	20
Bulgaria	9	5	3	1	14	6	18
Slovenia	9	3	1	5	9	12	10
Albania	8	2	3	3	8	7	9
Belarus	9	2	1	6	11	19	7
Luxembourg	9	0	0	9	1	20	0

Remaining games
13.10.07 Belarus-Luxembourg
13.10.07 Romania-Holland
13.10.07 Slovenia-Albania
17.10.07 Albania-Bulgaria
17.10.07 Holland-Slovenia
17.10.07 Luxembourg-Romania
17.11.07 Albania-Belarus
17.11.07 Bulgaria-Romania
17.11.07 Holland-Luxembourg
21.11.07 Belarus-Holland
21.11.07 Romania-Albania
21.11.07 Slovenia-Bulgaria

Top two in each group qualify for finals. Austria and Switzerland qualify automatically as co-hosts

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Group 1

Sep 8 - Libreville
Gabon 0
Ivory Coast 0

GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	4	3	1	0	13	0	10
Gabon	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Madagascar	4	0	0	4	0	14	0

Djibouti withdrew

Group 2

Sep 9 - Bujumbura
Burundi 0
Egypt 0

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	5	2	3	0	8	2	9
Burundi	5	2	1	2	5	6	7
Botswana	5	2	1	2	3	6	7
Mauritania	5	1	1	3	7	9	4

Remaining games
14.10.07 Egypt-Botswana
14.10.07 Mauritania-Burundi

Group 3

Sep 8 - Warri
Nigeria 2 (Makinwa 43, Uche 61)
Lesotho 0
HT: 1-0

Sep 8 - Kampala
Uganda 3 (Obua pen 2, 76, 86)
Niger 1 (Idrissa 45)
HT: 1-1

GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	6	5	0	1	10	3	15
Uganda	6	3	2	1	8	3	11
Niger	6	1	1	4	5	11	4
Lesotho	6	1	1	4	3	9	4

Group 4

Sep 9 - Curepipe
Mauritius 1 (Perle 62)
Seychelles 1 (Denis pen 42)
HT: 0-1

Sep 9 - Omdurman
Sudan 3 (Babiker 25, Al-Ajab pen 60, El-Bashir 74)
Tunisia 2 (Nafti 55, Dos Santos pen 82)
HT: 1-0

GROUP 4 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sudan	6	5	0	1	13	4	15
Tunisia	6	4	1	1	12	3	13
Seychelles	6	1	1	4	3	14	4
Mauritius	6	0	2	4	3	10	2

Group 5

Sep 9 - Malabo
Equatorial Guinea 1 (Edjogo 39)
Cameroon 0
HT: 1-0

Sep 9 - Kigali
Rwanda 4 (Labama 21, Makasi 29, Witakenge 85, Karekezi 90)
Liberia 0
HT: 2-0

GROUP 5 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	6	5	0	1	13	4	15
Eq Guinea	6	3	1	2	6	7	10
Rwanda	6	2	0	4	10	11	6
Liberia	6	1	1	4	6	13	4

Group 6

Sep 8 - Nairobi
Kenya 2 (Oboya 18, Oliech 87)
Angola 1 (Manucho 35)
HT: 1-1

Sep 9 - Manzini
Swaziland 0
Eritrea 0

GROUP 6 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	6	4	1	1	16	5	13
Eritrea	6	2	3	1	5	8	9
Kenya	6	2	1	3	6	7	7
Swaziland	6	0	3	3	0	7	3

Group 7

Sep 8 - Dakar
Senegal 5 (N'Daw 22, Ndoye 70, H Camara 72, 82, E H Diouf 90)
Burkina Faso 1 (S A Traore 32)
HT: 1-1

Sep 8 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 0
Mozambique 1 (Tico Tico 1)
HT: 0-1

GROUP 7 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal	6	3	2	1	12	3	11
Mozambique	6	2	3	1	5	4	9
Tanzania	6	2	2	2	4	7	8
Burkina Faso	6	1	1	4	5	12	4

Group 8

Sep 9 - Bakau
Gambia 2 (Jatta 75, 86)
Algeria 1 (Saifi 56)
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Jallow (Gambia) 76min

Sep 9 - Conakry
Guinea 4 (Feindouno pen 19, Mohamed Cisse 32, I Camara 37, Ismael Bangoura 45)
Cape Verde Islands 0
HT: 4-0

GROUP 8 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea	6	3	2	1	10	3	11
Algeria	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Gambia	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Cape Verde Is	6	1	2	3	3	10	5

Group 9

GROUP 9	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali	5	2	3	0	8	1	9
Togo	5	3	0	2	7	7	9
Benin	5	2	2	1	8	4	8
Sierra Leone	5	0	1	4	1	12	1

Remaining games
12.10.07 Sierra Leone-Benin
12.10.07 Togo-Mali

Group 10

Sep 8 - Kinshasa
DR Congo 1 (Nonda pen 39)
Libya 1 (Hussein 51)
HT: 1-0

Sep 8 - Addis Abeba
Ethiopia 2 (Bogale 44, Seid 73)
Namibia 3 (Bester 70, 81, Katupose 90)
HT: 1-0

GROUP 10 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Namibia	6	3	1	2	9	8	10
DR Congo	6	2	3	1	8	6	9
Libya	6	2	2	2	7	6	8
Ethiopia	6	2	0	4	5	9	6

Group 11

Sep 9 - N'Djamena
Chad 1 (Mbaiguidim 90)
Congo 1 (Mayembi 6)
HT: 0-1

Sep 9 - Cape Town
South Africa 1 (McCarthy 50)
Zambia 3 (Katongo 9, 19, 20)
HT: 0-3

GROUP 11 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zambia	6	3	2	1	9	3	11
South Africa	6	3	2	1	10	4	11
Congo	6	1	4	1	5	6	7
Chad	6	0	2	4	3	14	2

Group 12

Sep 9 - Bulawayo
Zimbabwe 3 (Nkata 24, Mteki 54, Mwanjali 61)
Malawi 1 (Kanyenda 43)
HT: 1-1

GROUP 12 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Zimbabwe	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Malawi	4	1	0	3	2	6	3

Group winners and the three runners-up with the best record qualify for finals. Ghana qualify automatically as hosts

SOUTH PACIFIC GAMES*

**Tournament doubled as the 1st stage of the Oceania World Cup qualifiers*

In Apia, Samoa

Group A

Aug 25
Tahiti 0
New Caledonia 1 (Wajoka pen 9)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hester (NZ)
Sent off: J Hmae (New Caledonia)

Aug 25
Fiji 16 (Krishna 6, 14, 22, Rabo 11, 34, 45, Baleitoga 19, Tiwa 28, 30, Vakatalesau 42, 46, 65, 73, 82, 89, Finau 68)
Tuvalu 0
HT: 10-0. **Ref:** Aimaasu (Sam)

Aug 27
New Caledonia 1 (Kabeu 52)
Tuvalu 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Sogo (Sol)
Sent off: Sinedo (New Caledonia)

Aug 27
Fiji 4 (Vakatalesau pen 18, Waqa 40, Bukalidi 62, Kainihewe 83)
Cook Islands 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Fred (Van)
Sent off: D Shepherd (Cook Is) 39min

Aug 29
Tahiti 1 (Williams 45)
Tuvalu 1 (Sekifu 88)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Lengata (Sol)

Aug 29
New Caledonia 3 (Kabeu 36, 85, Wajoka pen 50)
Cook Islands 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Fox (NZ)

Sep 1
Cook Islands 4 (Mateariki 28, 69, Le Mouton 88, Tom 90)
Tuvalu 1 (Willis og 83)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Hester (NZ)

Sep 1
Fiji 4 (Waqa 17, Baleitoga 38, Vakatalesau 49, 73)
Tahiti 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Fox (NZ)
Sent off: Gelima (Tahiti) 31min

Sep 3
Fiji 1 (Kainihewe 56)
New Caledonia 1 (Wajoka 43)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Fred (Van)

Sep 3
Tahiti 1 (Tinorua 64)
Cook Islands 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Aimaasu (Sam)
Sent off: Bennett (Tahiti) 53min; Joseph 65min, Le Mouton 66min (both Cook Islands)

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fiji	4	3	1	0	25	1	10
New Caledonia	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Tahiti	4	1	1	2	2	6	4
Cook Islands	4	1	0	3	4	9	3
Tuvalu	4	0	1	3	2	22	1

Group B

Aug 25
Solomon Islands 12 (Totori 12, 15, Menapi pen 20, 41, 75, 82, Fa'arodo 43, Waita 58, 85, Beubeu 69, Molea 77, Takayama 90)
American Samoa 1 (Ott pen 55)
HT: 5-0

Aug 25
Samoa 0
Vanuatu 4 (Iwai 21, Naprapol 43, Poida 66, Soromon 90)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Averii (Tah)

Aug 27
Solomon Islands 4 (Menapi 5, 13, Fa'arodo 51, Maemae 66)
Tonga 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Aimaasu (Sam)

Aug 27
Samoa 7 (Tuma 24, 51, Faaluaso 29, Cahill pen 43, 67, Fonoti 61, J Michael 76)
American Samoa 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Minan (PNG)

Aug 29
Vanuatu 15 (Poida 19, Mermer 24, 45, 45, 68, Sakama 43, 79, 90, Chichirua 56, Soromon 62, 81, 84, 90, 90, Tomake 72)
American Samoa 0
HT: 5-0. **Ref:** Hester (NZ)
Sent off: Terence Sinapati (American Samoa) 39min

Aug 29
Samoa 2 (Faaluaso 45, Taylor 83)
Tonga 1 (Feao 53)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Sosongan (PNG)

Sep 1
Tonga 4 (Moala pen 37, Palu 54, 61, Uhatahi 86)
American Samoa 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Minan (PNG)

Sep 1
Solomon Islands 2 (Bebeu 60, Fa'arodo 64)
Vanuatu 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Averii (Tah)

Sep 3
Samoa 0
Solomon Islands 3 (Totori 1, 37, Maemae 67)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Hester (NZ)

Sep 3
Vanuatu 4 (Soromon 23, 33, 40, Maleb 75)
Tonga 1 (Savieti 49)
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Minan (PNG)

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Solomon Is	4	4	0	0	21	1	12
Vanuatu	4	3	0	1	23	3	9
Samoa	4	2	0	2	9	8	6
Tonga	4	1	0	3	6	10	3
Am Samoa	4	0	0	4	1	38	0

Semi-finals

Sep 5
Solomon Islands 2 (Fa'arodo 40, Menapi 47)
New Caledonia 3 (Kabeu 34, P Toto 54, Mercier 90)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Minan (PNG)
Sent off: Maemae 68min, Omokirio 83min (both Solomon Islands)

Sep 5
Fiji 3 (Baleitoga 44, Vakatalesau pen 66, Krishna 69)
Vanuatu 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Hester (NZ)

Third-place play-off

Sep 7
Solomon Islands 0
Vanuatu 2 (Soromon 45, Sakama 50)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Averii (Tah)

Final

Sep 7
New Caledonia 1 (J Hmae 61)
Fiji 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Hester (NZ)

New Caledonia, Fiji and Vanuatu qualified for the 2nd stage of the Oceania World Cup qualifiers, to which New Zealand received a bye

NEHRU GOLD CUP

In New Delhi

Aug 17: India 6 Cambodia 0.
Aug 18: Bangladesh 0 Syria 2.
Aug 19: Kyrgyzstan 4 Cambodia 3.
Aug 20: India 1 Bangladesh 0.
Aug 21: Syria 4 Kyrgyzstan 1.
Aug 22: Bangladesh 1 Cambodia 1.
Aug 23: India 2 Syria 3.
Aug 24: Bangladesh 0 Kyrgyzstan 3.
Aug 25: Cambodia 1 Syria 5.
Aug 26: India 3 Kyrgyzstan 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Syria	4	4	0	0	14	4	12
India	4	3	0	1	12	3	9
Kyrgyzstan	4	2	0	2	8	10	6
Bangladesh	4	0	1	3	1	7	1
Cambodia	4	0	1	3	5	16	1

Top two qualified for Final

Final

Aug 29
India 1 (Pradeep 43)
Syria 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Ayan (Syria) 45min

AUSTRIA TOURNAMENT

Sep 7 - Vienna
Switzerland 2 (Barnetta 13, Streller 55)
Chile 1 (Sanchez 44)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 2,500. **Ref:** Stuchlik (Aut)
Switzerland: Zuberbuhler - P Degen, Djourou (Eggimann 46), Senderos, Magnin, Behrami (Vonlanthen 46), Celestini, Inler (Huggel 87), Barnetta (Spycher 74), Margairaz (Yakin 66), N'Kufo (Streller 46).
Chile: Bravo - Alvarez (Fierro 87), Riffo, Fuentes, Vidal (Estrada 66), Iturra, Isla (Jimenez 66), Fernandez, Rubio, Sanchez, Suazo (Salas 86).

Sep 7 - Klagenfurt
Austria 0
Japan 0
Att: 26,142. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Austria 4-3 on pens
Austria: Payer - Garics, Prodl, Hiden, Fuchs, Standfest, Aufhauser, Saumel (Salmutter 85), Leitgeb, Morz (Linz 59), Kuljic (Hamik 75; Prager 84).
Japan: Kawaguchi - Kaji, Nakazawa, Tullo Tanaka, Komano (Konno 90), Inamoto (K Nakamura 71), K Suzuki, S Nakamura, Endo, Tatsuya Tanaka (Matsui 71), Yano (Maki 75).

Sep 11 - Klagenfurt
Switzerland 3 (Magnin 11, N'Kufo pen 13, Djourou 81)
Japan 4 (S Nakamura pen 53, pen 78, Maki 68, Yano 90)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 19,500. **Ref:** Messner (Aut)
Switzerland: Benaglio - Behrami, Von Bergen (Eggimann 87), Senderos, Magnin (Barnetta 46), Huggel (Celestini 68), Inler (Djourou 78), Vonlanthen (Lichtsteiner 71), Margairaz (Yakin 46), Spycher, N'Kufo.
Japan: Kawaguchi - Kaji, Nakazawa, Tullo Tanaka, Komano, Suzuki, Inamoto, S Nakamura (K Nakamura 90), Endo (Sato 87), Matsui (Yamagishi 71), Maki (Yano 80).

Sep 11 - Vienna
Austria 0
Chile 2 (Droguett 66, Rubio 84)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Granat (Pol)
Austria: Macho - Garics, Prodl (Patocka 81), Hiden, Fuchs (Gercaliu 74), Aufhauser (Saumel 71), Prager (Morz 61), Leitgeb (Salmutter 79), Standfest, Linz (Hoffer 74), Kuljic.
Chile: Peric - Medel, Ponce, Riffo, Fierro (Iturra 67), Maldonado, Droguett (Estrada 85), Jimenez (Fernandez 56), Sanchez (Villanueva 88), Salas (Suazo 71), M Gonzalez (Rubio 76).

AUSTRIA TOURNAMENT – FINAL	P	W	D+	D-	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	2	1	0	1	0	4	3	4
Chile	2	1	0	0	1	3	2	3
Switzerland	2	1	0	0	1	5	5	3
Austria	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	2

Teams drawing then winning on penalties (D+) received two points; those drawing then losing on penalties (D-) received one point

FRIENDLIES

Saturday, September 1

Sep 1 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 1 (Kassim 55)
Uganda 0
HT: 0-0

Friday, September 7

Sep 7 - Al Muharraq
Bahrain 1 (Al-Muqla 58)
Jordan 3 (Dheeb 24, 55, Mahrmea 90)
HT: 0-1

Saturday, September 8

Sep 8 - Larnaca
Cyprus 3 (Michael 31, Okkas 42, Constantinou 52)
Armenia 1 (Arzumanyan 35)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Trattos (Cyp)

Sep 8 - Quito
Ecuador 5 (Lara 13, Benitez 29, 49, F Caicedo 45, Urrutia pen 53)
El Salvador 1 (Quintanilla 36)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Carlillo (Per)
Ecuador: Klimowicz - Campos, Hurtado (G Espinoza 57), Guagua, Ambrossi, Urrutia (Aguirre 81), Mendez (L Bolanos 57), Castillo, Lara (Vaca 67), Benitez (Ladines 67), F Caicedo (J Guerron 67).
El Salvador: Salinas (Gomez 33) - Anaya, Enriquez, Escobar, Pacheco (Carballo 76), Merino, Alas, Quintanilla (Calderon 86), Sanchez, Cerritos (Salazar 65), J Martinez (Campos 53).
Sent off: Merino 45min, Campos 62min.

Sep 8 - Almaty
Kazakhstan 1 (Nurdauletov 54)
Tajikistan 1 (Saidov 42)
HT: 0-1

Sep 8 - Rouen, France
Morocco 0
Ghana 2 (Agogo 47, Barusso 67)
HT: 0-0
Morocco: Lamyaghri - Chretien, Alioui, Kharja, El Kaddouri, Safri, Kissi, Hadji (Moha 69), Chamakh (Alloudi 82), El Moubarki (Abdessadki 46), Boussoufa (Aboucherouane 46).
Ghana: R Kingston - Paintsil, Dickoh (Barusso 61), Illiasu, Asare (Agogo 46), Annan, E Addo, Essien, Muntari (Ayew 36), Amoah (Sakyi), L Kingston.

Sep 8 - Lima
Peru 2 (Guerrero 49, 90)
Colombia 2 (Renteria 33, Falcao Garcia 72)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Carpio (Ecu)
Peru: Butron - Prado, Acasiete, Rodriguez, Vargas, Jayo, Solano (P Garcia 77), Hidalgo (Chiroque 63), Guerrero, Aguirre (Quinteros 46), Pizarro.
Colombia: Zapata - Vallejo, L Perea, Mosquera, Velez, Amaya, Castrillon (Guarin 88), Araujo (Hernandez 55), Sanchez, D Moreno (Falcao Garcia 61), Renteria. *Sent off: Guarin 89min.*

Sep 8 - Puerto Ordaz
Venezuela 3 (Arismendi 67, Maldonado 74, Guerra 90)
Paraguay 2 (Riveros 38, 64)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Lopez (Col)
Venezuela: Vega - H Gonzalez (Rosales 57), Rey, A Cichero, Vallenilla (G Cichero 57), M Mea Vitali, Vielma (Seijas 57), Paez, Guerra, Arango (Arismendi 46), Maldonado (Diaz 87).
Paraguay: Lapczyk - Vera, Veron, P Da Silva, Morel Rodriguez (Nunez 82), E Barreto (Gavilan 86), V Caceres, Riveros, Santa Cruz (O Cardozo 82), Cabanas (Lopez 71), Haedo Valdez (Bonet 65).
Sent off: Vera 60min.

Sunday, September 9

Sep 9 - East Hartford, USA
Costa Rica 0
Honduras 0
Att: 8,000. **Ref:** Vaughn (USA)
Costa Rica 3-2 on pens
Costa Rica: Porras - V Cordero, Segares, Badilla, Azofeifa (D Fonseca 89), Centeno, Rojas (Ruiz 41), Diaz, Myrie (Herrera 86), Gomez (Nunez 80), Saborio (Aleman 72).
Honduras: Valladares - Mendoza, Bernardez, Figueroa, E Izaguirre, Guevara, M Suazo (Thomas 67), Alvarez (R Nunez 80), Leon (E Martinez 69), D Suazo, Costly.

**Sep 9 - Puebla*
Mexico 1 (Baloy og 33)
Panama 0
**Match abandoned at half-time – flooded pitch*

Sep 9 - Chicago
United States 2 (Bocanegra 21, Dempsey 73)
Brazil 4 (Onyewu og 33, Lucio 53, Ronaldinho 75, Elano pen 90)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 43,543. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
United States: Howard - Cherundolo, Onyewu, Bocanegra, Pearce (Arnaud 86), Bradley, Feilhaber (Convey 70), Donovan, Beasley, Wolff (Johnson 70), Dempsey.
Brazil: Doni - Maicon (Daniel Alves 64), Lucio, Juan (Edu Dracena 46), Gilberto, Mineiro, Gilberto Silva, Kaka (Julio Baptista 70), Robinho (Elano 78), Ronaldinho (Diego 85), Afonso Alves (Vagner Love 64).

Tuesday, September 11

Sep 11 - Melbourne
Australia 0
Argentina 1 (Demichelis 49)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 70,000
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Carney, Culina, Beauchamp, Wilkshire, Skoko (Valeri 52), Grella, Bresciano (Holman 58), Thompson (Carle 63), Kennedy (Mrdja 82).
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Burdisso, Demichelis, G Milito, Heinze, Zanetti, Mascherano, Gutierrez (Gago 71), Insua (C Ledesma 81), Messi (Aguero 90), Tevez (Saviola 84).

Sep 11 - Riyadh
Saudi Arabia 5 (Al-Qahtani 5, 51, Khariri 25, Al-Harthi pen 57, Tukar pen 90)
Ghana 0
HT: 2-0

Wednesday, September 12

Sep 12 - Baku
Azerbaijan 1 (Subasic 44)
Georgia 1 (Tatanashvili 48)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Kovalenko (Uzb)

Sep 12 - Toronto
Canada 1 (De Rosario 53)
Costa Rica 1 (Nunez 48)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)
Canada: Hirschfeld - Serioux, Hainault (Occean 72), Brennan, Hutchinson (Jazic 46), De Guzman, Stalteri, Bernier, Radzinski (Hume 56), De Rosario, Gerba (Friend 74).
Costa Rica: Porras - V Cordero, Segares, Badilla (D Fonseca 57), Diaz, Myrie, Rojas (Gomez 57), Centeno (Eras 90), Azofeifa, Nunez (Saborio 83), Ruiz (Aleman 83). *Sent off: Azofeifa 48min.*

Sep 12 - Bogota
Colombia 1 (Renteria 37)
Paraguay 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Buckley (Per)
Colombia: Julio - Bustos, L Perea, Mosquera (Zapata 67), Velez (Arizala 65), Anchico (Sanchez 82), Amaya, Castrillon, Torres (Araujo 68), Falcao Garcia (Moreno 61), Renteria (Preciado 72).
Paraguay: Villar - Bonet, J C Caceres, P Da Silva (Maldonado 82), Nunez, E Barreto (Gavilan 72), V Caceres, Riveros, Lopez (Veron 89), Haedo Valdez (Montiel 65), O Cardozo.

Sep 12 - Cologne
Germany 3 (Schneider 42, Odonkor 65, Podolski 82)
Romania 1 (Goian 3)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 44,500. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
Germany: Hildebrand - Hilbert, M Friedrich, Metzelder (A Friedrich 46), Jansen (Castro 46), Hitzlsperger (Rolfes 46), Schneider (Odonkor 60), Trochowski, Schweinsteiger, Helmes, Podolski.
Romania: Coman - Marin, Tamas, Goian (Constantin 71), Rat (Stefan Radu 75), Chivu (D Petre 23), Codrea (Munteanu 63), Nicolita, Dica (Cristea 87), Mutu, Marica (Bucur 73).

Sep 12 - San Pedro Sula
Honduras 2 (De Leon 76, D Suazo 82)
Ecuador 1 (Guagua 89)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)
Honduras: Valladares - Mendoza (Garcia 71), Bernardez, Figueroa, E Izaguirre, Guevara (Thomas 65), De Leon (E Martinez 86), Rodriguez (Turcios 62), Alvarez (R Nunez 70), Costly, D Suazo (Mejia 86).
Ecuador: Viteri - Campos, G Espinoza, Guagua, Aguirre (L Bolanos 73), Ambrossi, Castillo, Urrutia (A Bolanos 85), Lara (Herron 85), Zura (F Caicedo 46), Benitez.

Sep 12 - Valletta
Malta 0
Armenia 1 (Artur Voskanyan 29)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Richmond (Sco)

Sep 12 - Foxboro, USA
Mexico 1 (Cacho 42)
Brazil 3 (Kleber 44, Kaka 79, Afonso Alves 87)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 67,584. **Ref:** Toledo (USA)
Mexico: Ochoa - I Castro, Magallon, Marquez, Salcido, Torrado (Landin 88), Correa, Arce, Guardado, Cacho (Dos Santos 73), Castillo (Vela 73).
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Daniel Alves (Maicon 59), Lucio, Edu Dracena, Kleber (Gilberto 75), Mineiro, Gilberto Silva (Josue 75), Kaka (Julio Baptista 81), Ronaldinho, Robinho (Afonso Alves 81), Vagner Love (Elano 55). *Sent off: Elano 80min.*

Sep 12 - Podgorica
Montenegro 1 (Vucinic 15)
Sweden 2 (Rosenberg 71, Prica 75)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Brugger (Aut)
Montenegro: Poleksic (D Bozovic 46) - Pavicevic (Lakic 80), Jeknic, Batak, Jovanovic (Pejovic 87), Bogavac (Purovic 73), Drincic, Pekovic, Boskovic (V Bozovic 77), Burzanovic (Novakovic 82), Vucinic.
Sweden: Isaksson (Shaaban 46) - M Nilsson (Alexandersson 87), Majstorovic, P Hansson (Granqvist 46), Edman, D Andersson, Djuric (Dorsin 82), Kallstrom (Linderoth 66), A Svensson (Johansson 66), Prica, Rosenberg.

Sep 12 - Lima
Peru 2 (Vargas 15, Guerrero 36)
Bolivia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)
Peru: Penny (Carvallo 46) - Prado, Rodriguez, Acasiete, Hidalgo (Vilchez 46), De la Haza, Solano (Aguirre 75), Quinteros (Jayo 65), Vargas, Pizarro (Gonzalez Vigil 82), Guerrero (Marino 65).
Bolivia: H Suarez - Hoyos, Alvarez, Raldes, Pena (Campos 46), Rodriguez, R Garcia (Gomez 77), J Vaca, Mojica (Lima 65), Moreno (Andaveris 61), Martins (Saucedo 76).

Sep 12 - Singapore
Singapore 1 (Wilkinson)
United Arab Emirates 1 (Mubarak)
HT: 1-0

Sep 12 - Johannesburg
South Africa 0
Uruguay 0
Ref: Bwanya (Zim)
South Africa: Fernandez (Marlin 46) - Nzama (Mere 60), A Mokoena, Mhlongo, Evans, Sibaya, Pienaar (Nomvete 83), Modise, Moriri (Nikosi 60), Sheppard (Vilakazi 72), McCarthy.
Uruguay: Castillo - Alvarez (Caceres 59), Valdez, Godin, Fucile (Ezquerra 84), Pereira, Gargano, Grosmuller (Mozzo 46), Rodriguez, Suarez, Abreu.

Sep 12 - Puerto La Cruz
Venezuela 1 (Maldonado 90)
Panama 1 (Escobar 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Buitriago (Col)
Venezuela: Morales (Vega 60) - Rosales, A Cichero, Vielma (Perozo 77), Rojas, L Vera (M Mea Vitali 60), Seijas, Paez (C Gonzalez 64), Guerra (Arismendi 46), Arango (G Cichero 85), Maldonado.
Panama: Penedo - R Torres (Vasquez 83), Baloy, Anderson (A Torres 46), Rivera, Perez, Monagas, Escobar (Barahona 72), Phillips (Heredia 46), B Perez (Aguilar 90), Brown (Blanco 62).

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP

In South Korea

Group A

Aug 18: Costa Rica 1 Togo 1; South Korea 0 Peru 1.
Aug 21: Togo 0 Peru 0; Costa Rica 2 South Korea 0.
Aug 24: South Korea 2 Togo 1; Peru 1 Costa Rica 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Peru	3	2	1	0	2	0	7
Costa Rica	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
South Korea	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Togo	3	0	2	1	2	3	2

Group B

Aug 18: North Korea 1 England 1; Brazil 7 New Zealand 0.
Aug 21: New Zealand 0 England 5; Brazil 6 North Korea 1.
Aug 24: North Korea 1 New Zealand 0; England 2 Brazil 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
Brazil	3	2	0	1	14	3	6
North Korea	3	1	1	1	3	7	4
New Zealand	3	0	0	3	0	13	0

Group C

Aug 19: Honduras 2 Spain 4; Argentina 0 Syria 0.
Aug 22: Syria 1 Spain 2; Argentina 4 Honduras 1.
Aug 25: Honduras 0 Syria 2; Spain 1 Argentina 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	3	2	1	0	7	4	7
Argentina	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
Syria	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
Honduras	3	0	0	3	3	10	0

Group D

Aug 19: Nigeria 2 France 1; Japan 3 Haiti 1.
Aug 22: Haiti 1 France 1; Japan 0 Nigeria 3.
Aug 25: Nigeria 4 Haiti 1; France 2 Japan 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	3	3	0	0	9	2	9
France	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Japan	3	1	0	2	4	6	3
Haiti	3	0	1	2	3	8	1

Group E

Aug 20: Belgium 2 Tunisia 4; Tajikistan 4 United States 3.
Aug 23: United States 1 Tunisia 3; Tajikistan 0 Belgium 1.
Aug 26: Belgium 0 United States 2; Tunisia 1 Tajikistan 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	3	3	0	0	8	3	9
United States	3	1	0	2	6	7	3
Tajikistan	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Belgium	3	1	0	2	3	6	3

Group F

Aug 20: Colombia 3 Germany 3; Trinidad & Tobago 1 Ghana 4.
Aug 23: Ghana 2 Germany 3; Trinidad & Tobago 0 Colombia 5.
Aug 26: Colombia 1 Ghana 2; Germany 5 Trinidad & Tobago 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	3	2	1	0	11	5	7
Ghana	3	2	0	1	8	5	6
Colombia	3	1	1	1	9	5	4
Trinidad & Tob	3	0	0	3	1	14	0

Top two in each group and the four third-placed sides with the best record qualified for 1st knockout round

1st knockout round

Aug 29: Spain 3 North Korea 0; Tunisia 1 France 3 (aet); Peru 1 Tajikistan 1 (aet; Peru 5-4 on pens); Ghana 1 Brazil 0.
Aug 30: Argentina 2 Costa Rica 0; Nigeria 2 Colombia 1; England 3 Syria 1; Germany 2 United States 1.

Quarter-finals

Sep 1: France 1 Spain 1 (aet; Spain 5-4 on pens); Peru 0 Ghana 2.
Sep 2: Argentina 0 Nigeria 2; England 1 Germany 4.

Semi-finals

Sep 5: Spain 2 Ghana 1 (aet).
Sep 6: Nigeria 3 Germany 1.

Third-place play-off

Sep 9: Ghana 1 Germany 2.

Final

Sep 9 - Seoul
Spain 0
Nigeria 0
Aet. **Att:** 36,125. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
Nigeria 3-0 on pens
Spain: De Gea - Morgado (Illarramendi 106), Rochela, Nacho (Alex 67), Camacho, Merida, Lopez, Lukas (Gonzalez 81), Iago, Sergio, Aquino.
Nigeria: Ajiboye - Oseni, Udoh, Joshua, Osanga (Akinsola 73), Chrisantus, R Ibrahim, Edile, Alfa (Abdulkarim 96), M Ibrahim, Rafeal (Isa 46).

CLUB FOOTBALL EUROPE

EUROPEAN SUPER CUP

Aug 31 - Monaco
Milan (Ita) 3 (Inzaghi 54, Jankulovski 61, Kaka 86)
Sevilla (Spa) 1 (Renato 13)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Milan: Dida - Oddo, Kaladze, Nesta, Jankulovski, Gattuso (Emerson 72), Pirlo, Ambrosini, Kaka, Seedorf (Brocchi 88), Inzaghi (Gilardino 87).
Sevilla: Palop - Daniel Alves, Escude (Luis Fabiano 81), Poulsen, Dragutinovic, Jesus Navas, Marti (Kerzhakov 64), Keita, Duda (Maresca 73), Renato, Kanoute.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

3rd qualifying round

1st legs - August 14/15;
2nd legs - August 28/29/September 3
Ajax (Hol) v Slavia Prague (Cze) 0-1, 1-2 (agg 1-3); BATE Borisov (Bls) v Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 2-2, 0-2 (agg 2-4); Benfica (Por) v FC Copenhagen (Den) 2-1, 1-0 (agg 3-1); Fenerbahce (Tur) v Anderlecht (Blg) 1-0, 2-0 (agg 3-0); Lazio (Ita) v Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) 1-1, 3-1 (agg 4-2); Rangers (Sco) v Red Star Belgrade (Ser) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0); Salzburg (Aut) v Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3); Sarajevo (Bos) v Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 0-1, 0-3 (agg 0-4); Sevilla (Spa) v AEK Athens (Gre) 2-0, 4-1 (agg 6-1); Sparta Prague (Cze) v Arsenal (Eng) 0-2, 0-3 (agg 0-5); Spartak Moscow (Rus) v Celtic (Sco) 1-1, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-2; Celtic 4-3 on pens); Tampere United (Fin) v Rosenborg (Nor) 0-3, 0-2 (agg 0-5); Toulouse (Fra) v Liverpool (Eng) 0-1, 0-4 (agg 0-5); Valencia (Spa) v Elfsborg (Swe) 3-0, 2-1 (agg 5-1); Werder Bremen (Ger) v Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 2-1, 3-2 (agg 5-3); Zurich (Swi) v Besiktas (Tur) 1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3).
Losing teams entered UEFA Cup at 1st round stage

Group stage

Group A

Sep 18
Marseille (Fra) 2 (Rodriguez 76, Cisse 90)
Besiktas (Tur) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 44,576. **Ref:** Trefoloni (Ita)
Marseille: Mandanda - Bonnart, Rodriguez, Faty, Taiwo, Nasri (M'Bami 88), Cana, Zenden (Valbuena 76), Ziani, Cisse, Niang (Gragnic 86).
Besiktas: Hakan Arikan - Serdar Kurtulus (Ibrahim Kas 26), Diatta, Ibrahim Toraman, Ibrahim Uzulmez, Serdar Ozkan, Cisse, Ricardinho (Koray 44), Tello, Delgado (Higuain 75), Bobo.

Sep 18
Porto (Por) 1 (L Gonzalez pen 8)
Liverpool (Eng) 1 (Kuijt 17)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 41,208. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Porto: Nuno - Bosingwa, Joao Paulo, Bruno Alves, Fucile, L Gonzalez, Paulo Assuncao, Raul Meireles (M Gonzalez 64), Sektioui (Farias 64), Lopez, Quaresma.
Liverpool: Reina - Arbeloa, Hyypia, Carragher, Finnan, Babel (Fabio Aurelio 85), Mascherano, Gerrard, Pennant, Fernando Torres (Voronin 76), Kuijt. *Sent off: Pennant 58min.*

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Marseille	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Liverpool	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Porto	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Besiktas	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Sep 18 Marseille-Besiktas 2-0
Sep 18 Porto-Liverpool..... 1-1
Oct 3 Besiktas-Porto
Oct 3 Liverpool-Marseille
Oct 24 Besiktas-Liverpool
Oct 24 Marseille-Porto
Nov 6 Liverpool-Besiktas
Nov 6 Porto-Marseille
Nov 28 Besiktas-Marseille
Nov 28 Liverpool-Porto
Dec 11 Marseille-Liverpool
Dec 11 Porto-Besiktas

Group B

Sep 18
Chelsea (Eng) 1 (Shevchenko 53)
Rosenborg (Nor) 1 (Koppinen 24)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 24,973. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Chelsea: Cech - Belletti, Terry, Alex, A Cole (Ben Haim 74), J Cole (Wright-Phillips 74), Essien, Makelele, Malouda, Kalou, Shevchenko.
Rosenborg: Hirschfeld - Strand, Basma (Kvarme 46), Koppinen, Dorsin, Skjelbred (Iversen 85), Sapara (Konan Ya 69), Riseth, Tettey, Traore, Kone.

Sep 18
Schalke (Ger) 0
Valencia (Spa) 1 (Villa 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 53,951. **Ref:** Wegereef (Hol)
Schalke: Neuer - Rafinha (Grossmuller 73), Westermann, Bordon, Pander, Ernst, Jones, Asamoah (Ozil 61), Rakitic, Altintop (Lovenkrands 73), Kuranyi.
Valencia: Canizares - Miguel, Albiol, Marchena, Moretti, Angulo (Joaquin 75), Albelda, Ivan Helguera, Silva, Morientes (Arizmendi 80), Villa (Sunny 90).

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valencia	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Rosenborg	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Chelsea	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Schalke	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Sep 18 Chelsea-Rosenborg..... 1-1
Sep 18 Schalke-Valencia 0-1
Oct 3 Rosenborg-Schalke
Oct 3 Valencia-Chelsea
Oct 24 Chelsea-Schalke
Oct 24 Rosenborg-Valencia
Nov 6 Schalke-Chelsea
Nov 6 Valencia-Rosenborg
Nov 28 Rosenborg-Chelsea
Nov 28 Valencia-Schalke
Dec 11 Chelsea-Valencia
Dec 11 Schalke-Rosenborg

Group C

Sep 18
Olympiakos (Gre) 1 (Galletti 55)
Lazio (Ita) 1 (Zauri 77)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Braamhaar (Hol)
Match played behind closed doors
Olympiakos: Nikopolidis - Patsatzoglou (Kovacevic 80), Antzas, Zewlakow, Domi, Torosidis, Galletti, Ledesma, Djordjevic, Stoltidis, Lua Lua.
Lazio: Ballotta - De Silvestri (Scaloni 81), Stendardo, Cribari, Zauri, Mudingayi, Ledesma, Mauri (Mutarelli 61), Manfredini (Del Nero 70), Pandev, Rocchi.

Sep 18
Real Madrid (Spa) 2 (Raul 16, Van Nistelrooy 74)
Werder Bremen (Ger) 1 (Sanogo 17)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Cannavaro, Metzelder, Marcelo, Higuain (Robinho 69), Gago, Guti (Drenthe 77), Sneijder, Raul (Robben 84), Van Nistelrooy.
Werder: Wiese - Pasanen, Mertesacker, Naldo, Tosic, Vranjes, Baumann, Jensen, Diego, Sanogo, Rosenberg (Hugo Almeida 69).

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Lazio	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Olympiakos	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Werder	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

Sep 18 Olympiakos-Lazio..... 1-1
Sep 18 Real Madrid-Werder Bremen ... 2-1
Oct 3 Lazio-Real Madrid
Oct 3 Werder Bremen-Olympiakos
Oct 24 Real Madrid-Olympiakos
Oct 24 Werder Bremen-Lazio
Nov 6 Lazio-Werder Bremen
Nov 6 Olympiakos-Real Madrid
Nov 28 Lazio-Olympiakos
Nov 28 Werder Bremen-Real Madrid
Dec 11 Olympiakos-Werder Bremen
Dec 11 Real Madrid-Lazio

Group D

Sep 18
Milan (Ita) 2 (Pirlo 9, Inzaghi 24)
Benfica (Por) 1 (Nuno Gomes 90)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 38,358. **Ref:** Riley (Eng)
Milan: Dida - Oddo (Bonera 81), Kaladze, Nesta, Jankulovski, Gattuso, Pirlo, Ambrosini, Kaka, Seedorf (Emerson 75), Inzaghi (Gilardino 84).
Benfica: Quim - Luis Filipe, Miguel Vitor (Binya 73), Edcarlos, Leo, Pereira, Di Maria, Katsouranis, Rodriguez, Rui Costa (Nuno Assis 87), Cardozo (Nuno Gomes 63).

Sep 18
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 2 (Brandao 6, Lucarelli 8)
Celtic (Sco) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
Shakhtar: Pyatov - Srna, Hubschman, Kucher, Rat, Ilsinho, Lewandowski, Jadson (Castillo 65), Fernandinho (Duljaj 86), Lucarelli (Gladkyy 70), Brandao.
Celtic: Boruc - Wilson, Caldwell, McManus, Naylor, Donati, Hartley, S Brown, Nakamura (McGeady 65), McDonald (Killen 68), Vennegoor of Hesselink (Zurawski 85).

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Milan	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Benfica	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Celtic	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Sep 18 Milan-Benfica..... 2-1
Sep 18 Shakhtar Donetsk-Celtic 2-0
Oct 3 Benfica-Shakhtar Donetsk
Oct 3 Celtic-Milan
Oct 24 Benfica-Celtic
Oct 24 Milan-Shakhtar Donetsk
Nov 6 Celtic-Benfica
Nov 6 Shakhtar Donetsk-Milan
Nov 28 Benfica-Milan
Nov 28 Celtic-Shakhtar Donetsk
Dec 4 Milan-Celtic
Dec 4 Shakhtar Donetsk-Benfica

Group E

Sep 19
Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Clerc og 21, Messi 82, Henry 90)
Lyon (Fra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 85,000. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Barcelona: Valdes - Zambrotta, Marquez, Milito, Abidal, Xavi (Giovani 79), Toure, Deco, Messi (Bojan 88), Ronaldinho (Iniesta 66), Henry.
Lyon: Vercoutre - Clerc, Squillaci, Bodmer, Reveiliere, Toulalan, Juninho, Kallstrom (Keita 83), Belhadj (Baros 62), Govou, Benzema (Ben Arfa 76).

Sep 19
Rangers (Sco) 2 (Adam 62, Darcheville pen 75)
Stuttgart (Ger) 1 (Gomez 56)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 49,795. **Ref:** Farina (Ita)
Rangers: McGregor - Hutton, Cuellar, Weir, Papac, Hemdani, Whittaker (Faye 86), Ferguson, Adam (Beasley 67), Thomson, Darcheville (Novo 83).
Stuttgart: Schafer - Osorio, Tasci, Fernando Meira, Boka, Hilbert, Pardo, Antonio (Ewerthon 70), Khedira (Basturk 78), Cacau, Gomez.

GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Rangers	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Stuttgart	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Lyon	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Sep 19 Barcelona-Lyon 3-0
Sep 19 Rangers-Stuttgart 2-1
Oct 2 Lyon-Rangers
Oct 2 Stuttgart-Barcelona
Oct 23 Rangers-Barcelona
Oct 23 Stuttgart-Lyon
Nov 7 Barcelona-Rangers
Nov 7 Lyon-Stuttgart
Nov 27 Lyon-Barcelona
Nov 27 Stuttgart-Rangers
Dec 12 Barcelona-Stuttgart
Dec 12 Rangers-Lyon

Group F

Sep 19
Roma (Ita) 2 (Perrotta 9, Totti 70)
Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Roma: Doni - Cassetti, Mexes, Juan (Ferrari 82), Tonetto, De Rossi, Aquilani (Pizarro 83), Taddei, Perrotta, Mancini (Giuly 61), Totti.
Dynamo: Shovkovskyi - Markovic, Fedorov, Gavrancic, El Kaddouri, Husiev (Correa 71), Mikhalik, Yussuf, Michael (Rebrov 56), Bangoura (Diogo Rincon 46), Shatskikh.

Sep 19
Sporting Lisbon (Por) 0
Manchester United (Eng) 1 (Cristiano Ronaldo 62)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 39,514. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
Sporting: Stojkovic - Abel, Tonel, Anderson Polga, Ronny (Bruno 74), Izmailov (Vukcevic 56), Miguel Veloso, Joao Moutinho, Romagnoli (Purovic 68), Yannick, Liedson.
Man Utd: Van der Sar - Brown, Ferdinand, Vidic, Evra, Carrick, Scholes, Nani, Giggs (Anderson 76), Cristiano Ronaldo (Tevez 87), Rooney (Saha 72).

GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Roma	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Man Utd	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Sporting	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Dynamo	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Sep 19 Roma-Dynamo Kyiv..... 2-0
Sep 19 Sporting Lisbon-Man Utd 0-1
Oct 2 Dynamo Kyiv-Sporting Lisbon
Oct 2 Man Utd-Roma
Oct 23 Dynamo Kyiv-Man Utd
Oct 23 Roma-Sporting Lisbon
Nov 7 Man Utd-Dynamo Kyiv
Nov 7 Sporting Lisbon-Roma
Nov 27 Dynamo Kyiv-Roma
Nov 27 Man Utd-Sporting Lisbon
Dec 12 Roma-Man Utd
Dec 12 Sporting Lisbon-Dynamo Kyiv

Group G

Sep 19
Fenerbahce (Tur) 1 (Delvid 43)
Internazionale (Ita) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo (Spa)
Fenerbahce: Volkan Demirel - Onder, Lugano, Edu, Roberto Carlos, Deniz, Alex, Mehmet Aurelio, Gokcek, Kezman (Semih 67), Delvid.
Inter: Julio Cesar - Zanetti, Lopez, Samuel, Maxwell, Stankovic, Dacourt (Jimenez 70), Cambiasso, Solari (Figo 57), Suazo (Crespo 72), Ibrahimovic.

Sep 19
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 2 (Lazovic 59, Perez 80)
CSKA Moscow (Rus) 1 (Vagner Love 89)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,500. **Ref:** Proenca (Por)
PSV: Gomes - Salcido, Da Costa, Addo, Alcides, Simons, Culina, Afellay (Perez 28), Mendez (Kromkamp 71), Koevermans (Farfan 75), Lazovic.
CSKA: Mandrykin - Semberas, Ignashevich, A Berezutsky, V Berezutsky, Zhirkov, Dudu, Krasic, Rahimic (Eduardo 78), Jo, Vagner Love.

GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Fenerbahce	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
CSKA	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Inter	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Sep 19 Fenerbahce-Internazionale 1-0
Sep 19 PSV-CSKA Moscow 2-1
Oct 2 CSKA Moscow-Fenerbahce
Oct 2 Internazionale-PSV
Oct 23 CSKA Moscow-Internazionale
Oct 23 PSV-Fenerbahce
Nov 7 Fenerbahce-PSV
Nov 7 Internazionale-CSKA Moscow
Nov 27 CSKA Moscow-PSV
Nov 27 Internazionale-Fenerbahce
Dec 12 Fenerbahce-CSKA Moscow
Dec 12 PSV-Internazionale

Group H

Sep 19
Arsenal (Eng) 3 (Fabregas 27, Van Persie 59, Eduardo 90)
Sevilla (Spa) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Arsenal: Almunia - Sagna, Toure, Senderos, Clichy, Hleb, Fabregas, Flamini, Rosicky (Diaby 50), Adebayor (Eduardo 83), Van Persie (Diarra 88).
Sevilla: Palop - Daniel Alves, Fazio, Escude, Dragutinovic, Jesus Navas, Poulsen, Marti (Keita 66), Diego Capel (Renato 67), Luis Fabiano (Kerzhakov 46), Kanoute.

Sep 19
Slavia Prague (Cze) 2 (Senkerik 13, Belaid 63)
Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 1 (Golan 33)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 19,000. **Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)
Slavia: Vaniak - Drizdal, Suchy, Brabec (Janda 43), Latka (Hubacek 46), Krajcik, Belaid (Volesak 81), Tavares, Pudil, Senkerik, Vlcek.
Steaua: Zapata - Badoi, Golan, Rada, Marin, Nicolita, Lovin (Surdu 62), Petre, Cristocea (Croitoru 53), Dica, Iacob (Badea 71).

GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Slavia	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Steaua	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Sevilla	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Sep 19 Arsenal-Sevilla..... 3-0
Sep 19 Slavia Prague-Steaua..... 2-1
Oct 2 Sevilla-Slavia Prague
Oct 2 Steaua-Arsenal
Oct 23 Arsenal-Slavia Prague
Oct 23 Sevilla-Steaua
Nov 7 Slavia Prague-Arsenal
Nov 7 Steaua-Sevilla
Nov 27 Sevilla-Arsenal
Nov 27 Steaua-Slavia Prague
Dec 12 Arsenal-Steaua
Dec 12 Slavia Prague-Sevilla

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round; third-placed sides enter UEFA Cup at the last-32 stage

UEFA CUP

2nd qualifying round

1st legs - August 16; 2nd legs - August 30

Atletico Madrid (Spa) v Vojvodina (Ser) 3-0, 2-1 (agg 5-1); Austria Wien (Aut) v Jablonec (Cze) 4-3, 1-1 (agg 5-4); Basle (Swi) v Mattersburg (Aut) 2-1, 4-0 (agg 6-1); Besa (Alb) v Litex Lovech (Bul) 0-3, 0-3 (agg 0-6); Brann (Nor) v Suduva (Lit) 2-1, 4-3 (agg 6-4); CFR Cluj (Rom) v Anorthosis (Cyp) 1-3, 0-0 (agg 1-3); Dinamo Minsk (Bls) v OB Odense (Den) 1-1, 0-4 (agg 1-5); Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo) v Rapid Wien (Aut) 0-3, 0-5 (agg 0-8); Dnipro (Ukr) v Belchatow (Pol) 1-1, 4-2 (agg 5-3); Drogheda (Ire) v Helsingborgs (Swe) 1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4); Dunfermline (Sco) v Hacken (Swe) 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2); Ekranas (Lit) v Valerenga (Nor) 1-1, 0-6 (agg 1-7); Hajduk Split (Cro) v Sampdoria (Ita) 0-1, 1-1 (agg 1-2); Haka (Fin) v Midtjylland (Den) 1-2, 2-5 (agg 3-7); Hammarby (Swe) v Fredrikstad (Nor) 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2); HJK Helsinki (Fin) v AaB Aalborg (Den) 2-1, 0-3 (agg 2-4); Honved (Hun) v Hamburg (Ger) 0-0, 0-4 (agg 0-4); Kaerjeng (Lux) v Standard Liege (Blg) 0-3, 0-1 (agg 0-4); Lokomotiv Sofia (Bul) v Otelul Galati (Rom) 3-1, 0-0 (agg 3-1); Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) v Erciyesspor (Tur) 1-1, 1-3 (agg 2-4); Metalurgs Liepaja (Lat) v AIK Stockholm (Swe) 3-2, 0-2 (agg 3-4); Mika Ashtarak (Arm) v Artmedia (Slk) 2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3); MyPa (Fin) v Blackburn (Eng) 0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3); Omonia (Cyp) v CSKA Sofia (Bul) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3); Rabotnicki (Mac) v Zrinjski (Bos) 0-0, 2-1 (agg 2-1); Ried (Aut) v Sion (Swi) 1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4); Siroki Brijeg (Bos) v Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 0-3, 0-3 (agg 0-6); Slaven (Cro) v Galatasaray (Tur) 1-2, 1-2 (agg 2-4); Tobol (Kaz) v Groclin (Pol) 0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3); Uniao Leiria (Por) v Maccabi Netanya (Isr) 0-0, 1-0 (agg 1-0); Young Boys (Swi) v Lens (Fra) 1-1, 1-5 (agg 2-6); Zlate Moravce (Slk) v Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) 0-2, 0-3 (agg 0-5).

1st round

The 16 losing teams in the Champions League 3rd qualifying round entered at this stage

1st legs - September 20

Aberdeen (Sco) 0 Dnipro 0; AEK Athens (Gre) 3 Salzburg (Aut) 0; Anderlecht (Blg) 1 Rapid Wien 1; Aris Salonika (Gre) 1 Zaragoza (Spa) 0; Artmedia 1 Panathinaikos (Gre) 2*; Atletico Madrid 4 Erciyesspor 0; Austria Wien 2 Valerenga 0; Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 3 Uniao Leiria 1; Bayern Munich (Ger) 1 Belenenses (Por) 0; Brann 0 Club Brugge (Blg) 1; Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) 1 Elfsborg (Swe) 2; Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 0 Ajax (Hol) 1; Empoli (Ita) 2 Zurich (Swi) 1; Everton (Eng) 1 Metalist (Ukr) 1; Getafe (Spa) 1 Twente (Hol) 0; Groclin 0 Red Star Belgrade (Ser) 1; Groningen (Hol) 1 Fiorentina (Ita) 1; Hammarby 2 Sporting Braga (Por) 1; Hapoel Tel Aviv 0 AIK Stockholm 0; Heerenveen (Hol) 5 Helsingborgs 3; Larisa (Gre) 2 Blackburn 0; Lens 1 FC Copenhagen (Den) 1; Litex Lovech 0 Hamburg 1; Lokomotiv Sofia 1 Rennes (Fra) 3; Midtjylland 1 Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 3; Mlada Boleslav (Cze) 0 Palermo (Ita) 1; Nurnberg (Ger) 0 Rapid Bucharest (Rom) 0; Pacos Ferreira (Por) 0 AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 1; Rabotnicki 1 Bolton (Eng) 1; Sampdoria 2 AaB Aalborg 2; Sarajevo (Bos) 1 Basle 2; Sion 3 Galatasaray 2; Sochaux (Fra) 0 Panionios (Gre) 2; Sparta Prague (Cze) 0 OB Odense 0; Spartak Moscow (Rus) 5 Hacken 0; Tampere United (Fin) 2 Bordeaux (Fra) 3; Tottenham (Eng) 6 Anorthosis 1; Toulouse (Fra) 0 CSKA Sofia 0; Villarreal (Spa) 4 BATE Borisov (Bls) 1; Zenit St Petersburg 3 Standard Liege 0.

*2nd legs - October 4 (*October 2)*

AUSTRIA

Aug 25: Austria Wien 1 Altach 0; Ried 0 Rapid Wien 3; Salzburg 3 Wacker Innsbruck 1; LASK Linz 0 Mattersburg 2.
Aug 26: Sturm Graz 1 Austria Karnten 3.
Aug 31: Altach 2 LASK Linz 2.
Sep 2: Austria Wien 1 Austria Karnten 0; Mattersburg 1 Salzburg 1; Wacker Innsbruck 0 Ried 1; Sturm Graz 1 Rapid Wien 0.
Sep 15: Ried 0 Wacker Innsbruck 0; Rapid Wien 1 Sturm Graz 5; LASK Linz 2 Altach 0; Salzburg 2 Mattersburg 1.
Sep 16: Austria Karnten 2 Austria Wien 1.

AUSTRIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria Wien	10	5	4	1	16	8	19
Salzburg	10	5	3	2	16	9	18
LASK Linz	10	5	2	3	12	12	17
Sturm Graz	10	4	4	2	21	14	16
Mattersburg	10	4	4	2	18	13	16
Rapid Wien	10	5	1	4	15	12	16
Ried	10	4	1	5	13	14	13
A Karnten	10	3	2	5	9	17	11
Altach	10	2	1	7	13	22	7
Wacker	10	0	4	6	8	20	4

BELGIUM

Saturday, August 25
Anderlecht 3 (Thereau 15, Wasilewski 17, Legear 89)
FC Brussels 0 Att: 25,000

Cercle Brugge 3 (Snelders 46, De Sutter 69, Iachtchouk 88)
Dender 0 Att: 5,000

Gent 1 (Gregoire 35)
Zulte Waregem 1 (Leye 15) Att: 10,000

Germinal Beerschot 1 (Losada pen 89)
Genk 2 (Alex da Silva 21, Barda 90) Att: 10,500

Mons 0
Lokeren 1 (Tambwe 23) Att: 4,000

Roeselare 0
Standard 4 (Jovanovic 12, 27, 71, Mbokani 67) Att: 6,000

Westerlo 0
Mouscron 2 (Coto 83, Tomou Bayard 85) Att: 5,000

Sunday, August 26
St Truiden 1 (Dreesen 89)
Charleroi 3 (Akpala 38, 48, 83) Att: 5,500

Monday, August 27
Mechelen 1 (Bajevski 50)
Club Brugge 1 (Clement 3) Att: 12,930

Friday, August 31
Charleroi 3 (Oulmers 24, Smolders 60, Habibou 83)
Mons 1 (Mirri 45) Att: 10,217

Saturday, September 1
FC Brussels 0
Roeselare 0 Att: 4,000

Cercle Brugge 4 (Gombani 6, Iachtchouk 32, 46, De Smet 89)
Gent 1 (Azofeifa 66) Att: 6,833

Dender 1 (De Storme 88)
St Truiden 0 Att: 3,000

Genk 1 (Bosnjak 75)
Westerlo 0 Att: 21,500

Lokeren 3 (El Mouataz 11, Vukomanovic 18, Tambwe 48)
Mechelen 1 (Nong 49) Att: 6,444

Zulte Waregem 2 (Leye 14, Meert 75)
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Ederson 34) Att: 6,000

Sunday, September 2
Mouscron 1 (Custovic 3)
Anderlecht 2 (Von Schlebrugge 15, Van Damme 87) Att: 9,000

Standard 2 (Jovanovic 65, Mbokani 69)
Club Brugge 1 (Vermant 66) Att: 24,000

Saturday, September 15
Anderlecht 2 (Hassan 42, 57)
Zulte Waregem 2 (Jelavic 74, 83) Att: 24,569

Club Brugge 1 (Blondel 67)
Lokeren 1 (Vukomanovic 86) Att: 25,093

Germinal Beerschot 1 (Tormena 57)
Charleroi 0 Att: 8,500

Mechelen 2 (Bajevski 87, Ivens 90)
Mouscron 2 (Nicolse 15, Custovic 68) Att: 9,970

Mons 2 (Landu Tubi 58, Cordaro 70)
FC Brussels 1 (Lutula 18) Att: 4,000

Roeselare 0
Cercle Brugge 2 (Gombani 78, 90) Att: 6,732

Westerlo 0
Dender 0 Att: 4,000

Sunday, September 16
Gent 1 (Thijs 69)
Standard 1 (De Camargo 43) Att: 11,000

St Truiden 1 (Hartog 7)
Genk 2 (Vrancken 14, Barda 25) Att: 12,000

BELGIUM	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Standard	6	5	1	0	19	5	16
Anderlecht	6	4	2	0	11	5	14
Genk	6	4	1	1	8	8	13
Cercle Brugge	6	4	0	2	13	8	12
Gent	6	3	2	1	14	7	11
Lokeren	6	3	2	1	7	4	11
Club Brugge	6	3	2	1	9	7	11
Charleroi	6	3	1	2	8	5	10
Mouscron	6	3	1	2	11	9	10
Zulte Waregem	6	2	2	2	7	10	8
Germinal B	6	2	1	3	5	6	7
Westerlo	6	2	1	3	2	4	7
Roeselare	6	1	3	2	4	8	6
Dender	6	1	2	3	5	10	5
Mons	6	1	1	4	6	11	4
Mechelen	6	0	3	3	5	9	3
FC Brussels	6	0	1	5	2	12	1
St Truiden	6	0	0	6	5	13	0

LEADING GOALSCORERS
7 Milan Jovanovic (Standard)
5 Christophe Gregoire (Gent)

BULGARIA

Aug 25: Spartak Varna 0 CSKA 2; Vidima-Rakovski 1 Chernomorets Burgas 1; Belasitsa 1 Vihren 0; Beroe 0 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0; Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Marek 0; Pirin 1 Botev 0; Lovech 2 Levski 1.
Aug 26: Slavia 3 Cherno More 1.
Sep 1: Levski 3 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Marek 1 Slavia 0; Vihren 0 Spartak Varna 1; Cherno More 1 Beroe 0; Chernomorets Burgas 1 Pirin 4.
Sep 2: Botev 2 Lokomotiv Sofia 2; Lovech 2 Belasitsa 0; CSKA 3 Vidima-Rakovski 1.
Sep 14: Spartak Varna 0 Lovech 0; Lokomotiv Sofia 4 Chernomorets Burgas 0.
Sep 15: Pirin 0 CSKA 1; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Cherno More 1; Beroe 1 Marek 1; Vidima-Rakovski 0 Vihren 1.
Sep 16: Slavia 4 Botev 2; Belasitsa 0 Levski 0.

BULGARIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	5	4	1	0	9	2	13
Pirin	5	4	0	1	8	2	12
Lok Sofia	5	3	2	0	11	4	11
Slavia	5	3	1	1	10	5	10
Levski	5	3	1	1	6	3	10
Lovech	5	2	2	1	6	4	8
Chernomorets	5	2	1	2	9	10	7
Vihren	5	2	0	3	3	4	6
Botev	5	1	2	2	11	9	5
Lok Plovdiv	5	1	2	2	5	7	5
Spartak Varna	5	1	2	2	3	5	5
Cherno More	5	1	1	3	4	7	4
Marek	5	1	1	3	2	6	4
V-Rakovski	5	1	1	3	3	10	4
Belasitsa	5	1	1	3	2	10	4
Beroe	5	0	2	3	1	5	2

CROATIA

Aug 24: Dinamo 3 Medimurje 1.
Aug 25: Zadar 5 Osijek 1; Inter 1 Cibalia 0; Hajduk 2 Zagreb 1; Sibenik 4 Varteks 3; Rijeka 1 Slaven 0.
Sep 1: Cibalia 3 Sibenik 3; Varteks 1 Rijeka 2; Zagreb 1 Dinamo 3; Medimurje 2 Zadar 4; Osijek 1 Inter 0.
Sep 2: Slaven 2 Hajduk 2.
Sep 14: Inter 3 Medimurje 0.
Sep 15: Zadar 1 Zagreb 0; Dinamo 4 Slaven 0; Hajduk 3 Varteks 1; Sibenik 3 Rijeka 2; Cibalia 2 Osijek 0.

CROATIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	8	8	0	0	29	5	24
Zadar	8	5	2	1	18	10	17
Rijeka	8	5	2	1	16	9	17
Hajduk	8	4	4	0	16	6	16
Slaven	8	4	1	3	14	8	13
Sibenik	8	2	4	2	14	19	10
Osijek	8	3	1	4	8	14	10
Zagreb	8	2	2	4	8	10	8
Cibalia	8	2	2	4	7	11	8
Inter	8	2	1	5	7	18	7
Medimurje	8	1	1	6	9	20	4
Varteks	8	0	0	8	7	23	0

CZECH REPUBLIC

Aug 25: Zizkov 1 Sparta 4; Olomouc 2 Most 2; Slavia 1 Brno 0.
Aug 26: Plzen 2 Bohemians 0; Jablonec 1 Ceske Budejovice 0; Mlada Boleslav 2 Kladno 1.
Aug 27: Teplice 2 Liberec 0; Zlin 2 Ostrava 2.
Sep 1: Liberec 0 Zlin 1; Ostrava 2 Plzen 0.
Sep 2: Most 2 Slavia 3; Ceske Budejovice 2 Mlada Boleslav 2; Kladno 1 Jablonec 1; Sparta 1 Olomouc 0.
Sep 3: Bohemians 2 Zizkov 2.
Sep 15: Slavia 0 Ostrava 0; Olomouc 1 Brno 1.
Sep 16: Zizkov 1 Liberec 1; Kladno 5 Ceske Budejovice 1; Jablonec 0 Bohemians 0; Mlada Boleslav 1 Most 1; Teplice 2 Sparta 1.
Sep 17: Plzen 1 Zlin 1.

CZECH REPUBLIC	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slavia	6	5	1	0	9	3	16
Teplice	5	5	0	0	10	3	15
Ostrava	6	4	2	0	14	5	14
Sparta	6	4	1	1	9	4	13
Zlin	6	2	3	1	6	5	9
Plzen	6	2	3	1	5	4	9
Kladno	6	2	1	3	10	10	7
M Boleslav	6	1	3	2	6	7	6
Jablonec	6	1	3	2	3	4	6
Olomouc	6	1	3	2	4	6	6
Brno	5	1	2	2	5	6	5
Zizkov	6	1	2	3	10	14	5
Bohemians	6	0	4	2	2	6	4
C Budejovice	6	1	1	4	6	11	4
Most	6	0	3	3	10	15	3
Liberec	6	0	2	4	2	8	2

DENMARK

Aug 25: OB 0 FC Copenhagen 0.
Aug 26: Esbjerg 1 AaB 2; Nordsjaelland 4 Viborg 0; Midtjylland 3 Randers 2; Horsens 4 Brondby 2.
Aug 27: AGF 0 Lyngby 0.
Sep 1: Viborg 2 AGF 0.
Sep 2: Lyngby 1 Midtjylland 2; Brondby 1 OB 1; FC Copenhagen 1 Randers 0; Horsens 4 Esbjerg 3.
Sep 3: AaB 2 Nordsjaelland 1.
Sep 15: FC Copenhagen 1 Horsens 0.
Sep 16: Randers 0 AGF 1; Midtjylland 2 OB 1; AaB 3 Brondby 0; Viborg 2 Lyngby 1.
Sep 17: Nordsjaelland 3 Esbjerg 1.

DENMARK	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Midtjylland	9	6	2	1	17	8	20
Copenhagen	9	5	3	1	12	5	18
Horsens	9	4	3	2	17	14	15
Randers	9	4	2	3	16	7	14
OB	9	3	5	1	14	9	14
AaB	9	4	2	3	14	14	14
Nordsjaelland	9	3	3	3	13	11	12
Esbjerg	9	3	1	5	22	20	10
Viborg	9	3	1	5	8	17	10
AGF	9	2	2	5	5	11	8
Brondby	9	1	3	5	9	18	6
Lyngby	9	1	3	5	5	17	6

ENGLAND

Saturday, August 25
Arsenal 1 (Fabregas 80)
Manchester City 0 Att: 60,144

Aston Villa 2 (Knight og 50, Maloney 90)
Fulham 1 (Dempsey 6) Att: 36,638

Bolton 3 (Speed 33, Anelka 56, Braaten 90)
Reading 0 Att: 20,233

Chelsea 1 (Lampard 31)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 41,501

Derby 1 (Oakley 51)
Birmingham 2 (Jerome 1, 63) Att: 31,117

Everton 1 (McFadden 78)
Blackburn 1 (Santa Cruz 15) Att: 33,850

Sunderland 0
Liverpool 2 (Sissoko 37, Voronin 86) Att: 45,645

West Ham 1 (Bowyer 81)
Wigan 1 (Scharner 78) Att: 33,793

Sunday, August 26
Manchester United 1 (Nani 68)
Tottenham 0 Att: 75,696

Middlesbrough 2 (Hossam 28, Arca 80)
Newcastle 2 (N'Zogbia 22, Viduka 77) Att: 28,875

Saturday, September 1
Bolton 1 (Anelka 55)
Everton 2 (Alyegbeni 11, Lescott 90) Att: 22,064

Fulham 3 (Dempsey 42, Smertin 77, Kamara 90)
Tottenham 3 (Kaboul 11, Berbatov 28, Bale 61) Att: 24,007

Liverpool 6 (Xabi Alonso 26, 69, Babel 45, Fernando Torres 56, 77, Voronin 76)
Derby 0 Att: 44,076

Manchester United 1 (Saha 71)
Sunderland 0 Att: 75,648

Middlesbrough 2 (Wheater 12, Downing 36)
Birmingham 0 Att: 22,920

Newcastle 1 (Owen 87)
Wigan 0 Att: 50,461

Reading 0
West Ham 3 (Bellamy 7, Etherington 49, 90) Att: 23,533

Sunday, September 2
Arsenal 3 (Adebayor pen 8, Fabregas 35, Rosicky 59)
Portsmouth 1 (Kanu 60) Att: 60,000

Aston Villa 2 (Knight 47, Agbonlahor 88)
Chelsea 0 Att: 37,714

Blackburn 1 (McCarthy 13)
Manchester City 0 Att: 24,000

Saturday, September 15
Birmingham 1 (Kapo 37)
Bolton 0 Att: 28,124

Chelsea 0
Blackburn 0 Att: 41,062

Everton 0
Manchester United 1 (Vidic 83) Att: 39,364

Portsmouth 0
Liverpool 0 Att: 20,388

Sunderland 2 (Jones 29, Wallace 47)
Reading 1 (Kitson 85) Att: 39,272

Tottenham 1 (Bale 15)
Arsenal 3 (Adebayor 65, 90, Fabregas 80) Att: 36,053

West Ham 3 (Bowyer 46, Young og 51, Ashton 62)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 34,351

Wigan 1 (Koumas pen 80)
Fulham 1 (Dempsey 11) Att: 16,973

Sunday, September 16
Manchester City 1 (Johnson 48)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 38,363

Monday, September 17
Derby 1 (Miller 39)
Newcastle 0 Att: 33,016

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	5	4	1	0	10	4	13
Man City	6	4	0	2	5	2	12
Liverpool	5	3	2	0	11	2	11
Man Utd	6	3	2	1	4	2	11
Chelsea	6	3	2	1	7	6	11
West Ham	5	3	1	1	8	3	10
Everton	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Blackburn	5	2	3	0	5	3	9
Wigan	6	2	2	2	7	5	8
Newcastle	5	2	2	1	6	4	8
Aston Villa	5	2	1	2	5	4	7
Birmingham	6	2	1	3	7	9	7
Middlesbrough	6	2	1	3	7	9	7
Sunderland	6	2	1	3	5	9	7
Portsmouth	6	1	3	2	7	8	6
Fulham	6	1	2	3	9	11	5
Tottenham	6	1	1	4	9	11	4
Reading	6	1	1	4	3	10	4
Derby	6	1	1	4	4	15	4
Bolton	6	1	0	5	7	11	3

LEADING GOALSCORER
4 Nicolas Anelka (Bolton)

FRANCE

Saturday, August 25
Bordeaux 2 (Bellion 11, 68)
Lorient 2 (Saifi 15, Namouchi 89) Att: 23,392

Caen 1 (Samson 90)
Marseille 2 (Rodriguez 42, Niang 54) Att: 20,790

Monaco 3 (Cufre pen 49, Menez 51, Piquionne 65)
Le Mans 1 (Matsui 31) Att: 11,033

Nancy 4 (Malonga Ntsayi 36, Kim 38, Biancalani 48, Fortune 53)
Auxerre 1 (Lejeune 60) Att: 18,132

Nice 1 (Ederson 42)
Toulouse 1 (Gignac 86) Att: 9,969

Rennes 2 (Thomert 45, 55)
Metz 0 Att: 24,078

Strasbourg 2 (Renteria 56, Cohade 64)
Lens 1 (Keita 70) Att: 24,668

Valenciennes 3 (Bezzaz 9, Chelle 44, Savidan 75)
Sochaux 1 (Quercia 5) Att: 13,566

Sunday, August 26
Lyon 1 (Benzema 53)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 38,438

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Frau 85)
Lille 1 (Makoun 42) Att: 31,634

Tuesday, August 28
Lorient 1 (Marchal 42)
Valenciennes 3 (Pujol 27, 40, Roudet 88) Att: 12,588

Wednesday, August 29
Auxerre 0
Rennes 2 (M'Bia 15, Briand 33) Att: 7,670

Le Mans 0
Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Armand 36, Diane 52) Att: 13,072

Lille 0
Monaco 1 (Piquionne 21) Att: 13,849

Marseille 0
Nice 2 (Hognon 51, Hellebuyck 87) Att: 57,000

Metz 0
Bordeaux 1 (Diarra 62) Att: 14,169

Saint-Etienne 2 (Ilan pen 35, Abdessadki og 69)
Strasbourg 0 Att: 25,694

Sochaux 1 (Birsa pen 22)
Lyon 2 (Benzema 20, Bodmer 57) Att: 15,744

Saturday, September 1
Bordeaux 2 (Chamakh 64, Wendel 75)
Monaco 1 (Nene 90) Att: 23,390

Caen 2 (Eluchans 33, Proment 66)
Sochaux 2 (N'Daw 60, Birsa pen 73) Att: 18,099

Lyon 3 (Govou 70, Benzema 75, Baros 77)
Le Mans 2 (Sessegnon 43, 54) Att: 35,043

Nancy 2 (Kim 12, Fortune 85)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 19,332

Rennes 2 (Leroy 48, Didot 55)
Lille 2 (Franquart 21, Bastos 77) Att: 23,934

Strasbourg 0
Lorient 0 Att: 20,245

Toulouse 2 (Elmander 68, Sissoko 90)
Auxerre 0 Att: 14,792

Valenciennes 0
Metz 0 Att: 13,811

Sunday, September 2
Nice 1 (Kone 52)
Lens 0 Att: 10,858

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Luyindula 20)
Marseille 1 (Cisse 11) Att: 43,419

Saturday, September 15
Auxerre 2 (Lejeune 5, Niculae 90)
Nice 0 Att: 7,591

Le Mans 2 (Sessegnon 41, De Melo 47)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 9,570

Lens 1 (Dindane pen 70)
Nancy 0 Att: 32,774

Lille 1 (Cabaye 3)
Bordeaux 1 (Bellion 40) Att: 13,770

Marseille 1 (Zubar 89)
Toulouse 2 (Emana 11, Elmander 37) Att: 53,650

Metz 1 (Gueye 46)
Lyon 5 (Benzema 4, 36, 38, Ben Arfa 59, Juninho 87) Att: 21,988

Saint-Etienne 3 (Ilan 10, 22, Gomis 49)
Caen 0 Att: 25,638

Sochaux 0
Strasbourg 0 Att: 16,087

Sunday, September 16
Lorient 0
Rennes 1 (Didot 35) Att: 13,674

Monaco 1 (Menez 85)
Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Armand 40, Diane 53) Att: 12,694

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nancy	7	5	1	1	13	5	16
Lyon	7	5	0	2	14	7	15
Bordeaux	8	4	3	1	10	6	15
Rennes	8	4	3	1	9	5	15
Valenciennes	8	4	2	2	12	9	14
Monaco	8	4	1	3	13	8	13
Le Mans	8	4	1	3	12	11	13
Strasbourg	8	3	3	2	8	5	12
Lorient	8	3	3	2	10	9	12
Saint-Etienne	8	3	2	3	9	6	11
Paris SG	8	2	5	1	7	6	11
Nice	8	3	2	3	7	7	11
Toulouse	6	3	1	2	8	8	10
Lille	8	1	6	1	8	8	9
Marseille	8	1	4	3	7	10	7
Auxerre	8	2	0	6	4	15	6
Lens	6	1	2	3	2	4	5
Caen	6	1	1	4	4	9	4
Sochaux	8	0	4	4	6	14	4
Metz	8	0	2	6	2	13	2

LEADING GOALSCORER
8 Karim Benzema (Lyon)

GERMANY

Friday, August 24
Bochum 2 (Sestak 45, Imhof 83)
Hamburg 1 (Van der Vaart pen 86) Att: 29,000

Saturday, August 25
Arminia Bielefeld 2 (Masmanidis 52, Wichniarek 90)
Hertha Berlin 0 Att: 20,000

Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Franz og 19, Friedrich 27, Gekas 35)
Karlsruhe 0 Att: 22,000

Bayern 3 (Toni 28, Van Bommel 69, Altintop 86)
Hannover 0 Att: 69,000

Borussia Dortmund 3 (Kringe 44, Klimowicz 70, 84)
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 65,000

Nurnberg 0
Werder Bremen 1 (Hamik 69) Att: 45,200

Stuttgart 1 (Gomez 34)
Duisburg 0 Att: 44,000

Sunday, August 26
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Meier 3)
Hansa Rostock 0 Att: 44,000

Wolfsburg 1 (Krzynowek 36)
Schalke 1 (Altintop 86) Att: 29,798

Friday, August 31
Schalke 1 (Kuranyi 45)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Gekas 53) Att: 61,482

Saturday, September 1
Duisburg 3 (Maicon 64, Ishiaku 68, 70)
Arminia Bielefeld 0 Att: 20,000

Energie Cottbus 1 (Sorensen pen 15)
Nurnberg 1 (Wolf 85) Att: 15,089

Hannover 3 (Hanke 12, Rosenthal 36, Hashemian 71)
Bochum 2 (Bechmann 44, Maltritz pen 66) Att: 30,794

Hansa Rostock 0
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Federico 76) Att: 20,000

Hertha Berlin 2 (Pantelic 38, Okoronkwo 88)
Wolfsburg 1 (Dejagah 61) Att: 40,000

Werder Bremen 2 (Sanogo 35, Pasanen 79)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Thurk 85) Att: 35,000

Sunday, September 2
Hamburg 1 (Zidan 87)
Bayern Munich 1 (Klose 70) Att: 56,000

Karlsruhe 1 (Hajnal 54)
Stuttgart 0 Att: 30,000

Friday, September 14
Borussia Dortmund 3 (Petric 22, 32, Klimowicz 29)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 79,030

Saturday, September 15
Arminia Bielefeld 4 (Bohme 31, Eigler 50, 55, Wichniarek 59)
Hansa Rostock 2 (Kern 47, Bulow 62) Att: 20,600

Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Hagui 62, Friedrich 88)
Bochum 0 Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 1 (Klose 54)
Schalke 1 (Rakitic 36) Att: 69,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Meier 8, 87)
Hamburg 1 (Van der Vaart pen 82) Att: 51,500

Nurnberg 2 (Misimovic 60, Mintal 89)
Hannover 2 (Hanke 12, 39) Att: 39,710

Stuttgart 3 (Cacau 53, Ewerthon 78, Gomez 82)
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 41,000

Sunday, September 16
Duisburg 1 (Lavric 78)
Hertha Berlin 2 (Pantelic 61, 70) Att: 25,070

Wolfsburg 1 (Krzynowek 21)
Karlsruhe 2 (Eggimann 63, Eichner 79) Att: 21,673

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	5	3	2	0	12	2	11
A Bielefeld	5	3	1	1	11	8	10
E Frankfurt	5	3	1	1	7	5	10
B Dortmund	5	3	0	2	9	7	9
Hertha Berlin	5	3	0	2	7	6	9
Karlsruhe	5	3	0	2	6	6	9
B Leverkusen	5	2	2	1	6	2	8
Schalke	5	1	4	0	9	6	7
Stuttgart	5	2	1	2	7	6	7
Hamburg	5	2	1	2	5	5	7
Bochum	5	2	1	2	8	9	7
Hannover	5	2	1	2	7	9	7
W Bremen	5	2	1	2	5	10	7
Duisburg	5	2	0	3	8	7	6
Nurnberg	5	1	2	2	5	7	5
Wolfsburg	5	1	1	3	7	9	4
E Cottbus	5	0	2	3	2	9	2
H Rostock	5	0	0	5	3	11	0

LEADING GOALSCORERS
4 Tommy Bechmann (Bochum)
4 Mike Hanke (Hannover)
4 Manasseh Ishiaku (Duisburg)
4 Miroslav Klose (Bayern Munich)
4 Alexander Meier (Eintracht Frankfurt)
4 Artur Wichniarek (Arminia Bielefeld)

GREECE

Sep 1: Aris 0 Panionios 0; Xanthi 1 PAOK 0.
Sep 2: Iraklis 0 Ergotelis 1; Asteras 0 Larisa 1; OFI 3 Apollon 2; Panathinaikos 0 Olympiakos 0; Atromitos 2 Levadiakos 1.

GREECE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
OFI	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Atromitos	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Ergotelis	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Larisa	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Xanthi	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Aris	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Olympiakos	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Panathinaikos	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Panionios	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
AEK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Veria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apollon	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Levadiakos	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Asteras	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Iraklis	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
PAOK	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

HOLLAND

Friday, August 24
Roda JC 2 (Lamah 4, Kah 80)
Heracles 1 (Klavan 76) Att: 13,000

Saturday, August 25
PSV 5 (Lazovic 7, 82, Addo 44, Fagner 86, Bakkal 89)
NEC 0 Att: 33,400

Vitesse 1 (Kolk 26)
AZ 0 Att: 17,855

VVV 3 (Blondelle 38, Amrabat 51, El Gaaouiri 90)
Excelsior 1 (Den Ouden 19) Att: 5,650

Willem II 2 (Hadouir 21, Boutahar 32)
Sparta 2 (Dissels 40, Roberts 88) Att: 12,750

Sunday, August 26
Ajax 4 (Suarez 44, 58, Vermaelen 45, Schilder 52)
Heerenveen 1 (Sulejmani 27) Att: 48,988

Feyenoord 5 (Makaay pen 21, Vlaar 49, Sahin 56, 72, De Guzman 69)
NAC 0 Att: 41,000

Groningen 0
De Graafschap 2 (De Groot 46, Powel 62) Att: 19,300

Twente 2 (N'Kufo pen 40, Engelaar 47)
Utrecht 2 (Broerse 27, Caluwe 56) Att: 13,000

Friday, August 31
AZ 3 (Agustien 24, Steinsson 45, De Zeeuw 62)
Excelsior 0 Att: 16,153

Saturday, September 1
Feyenoord 2 (Bruins 26, Makaay 43)
Willem II 0 Att: 45,000

Heerenveen 3 (Sibon 32, Pranjic 59, Roberts og 87)
Sparta 3 (Rose 45, Polak pen 56, Slot 60) Att: 25,500

NAC 4 (Kolkka 57, Feher 62, Amoah 81, 88)
Heracles 1 (Everton 50) Att: 14,860

Twente 0
PSV 0 Att: 13,150

Sunday, September 2
Ajax 2 (Suarez 33, Huntelaar 83)
Groningen 2 (Berg 36, 60) Att: 47,445

Utrecht 2 (Nelisse 45, 52)
De Graafschap 2 (De Groot 77, 88) Att: 18,500

Vitesse 1 (Gommans 17)
NEC 0 Att: 18,515

VVV 3 (Kantelberg 17, Linssen 23, Amrabat 30)
Roda JC 5 (Oper 12, 49, Yulu-Matondo 41, 60, Van Tornhout 89) Att: 6,000

Friday, September 14
Groningen 0
Utrecht 2 (Van Dijk pen 58, Somers 86) Att: 19,202

Saturday, September 15
De Graafschap 3 (De Groot 9, Fung a Wing 26, Keller 83)
VVV 2 (Leemans 89, Kantelberg 90) Att: 12,000

Excelsior 2 (Den Ouden 20, 28)
Heerenveen 5 (Sulejmani 39, Sibon 45, 51, Zuiverloon 45, Bradley 54) Att: 2,864

Heracles 0
Ajax 1 (Huntelaar 76) Att: 8,500

PSV 1 (Koevermans 7)
Vitesse 0 Att: 33,200

Sunday, September 16
NEC 0
NAC 1 (De Graaf 44) Att: 11,750

Roda JC 1 (Tiote 39)
Feyenoord 3 (Makaay pen 47, De Guzman 62, 70) Att: 17,148

Sparta 2 (Medunjanin og 6, Boukhari 51)
AZ 2 (Jenner 67, El Hamdaoui 76) Att: 9,000

Willem II 1 (Messoudi pen 25)
Twente 3 (N'Kufo 31, Demouge og 45, Denneboom 57) Att: 13,200

HOLLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Feyenoord	4	4	0	0	13	1	12
Ajax	4	3	1	0	15	4	10
PSV	4	3	1	0	8	0	10
Vitesse	4	3	0	1	4	2	9
Twente	4	2	2	0	7	3	8
AZ	4	2	1	1	9	3	7
Roda JC	4	2	1	1	9	8	7
De Graafschap	4	2	1	1	8	12	7
NAC	4	2	0	2	5	9	6
Heerenveen	4	1	2	1	9	9	5
Utrecht	4	1	2	1	6	7	5
Groningen	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Sparta	4	0	3	1	8	9	3
VVV	4	1	0	3	8	13	3
Willem II	4	0	2	2	3	7	2
NEC	4	0	1	3	1	8	1
Heracles	4	0	0	4	2	9	0
Excelsior	4	0	0	4	3	13	0

LEADING GOALSCORERS
6 Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Ajax)
5 Donny De Groot (De Graafschap)

HUNGARY

Aug 24: Diosgyor 2 Honved 2.
Aug 25: Debrecen 4 Kaposvar 0; Paks 3 Nyiregyhaza 0; Sopron 2 Rakospalota 1; Fehervar 7 Tatabanya 0; Siofok 1 MTK 1; Zalaegerszeg 0 Gyor 0.
Aug 27: Ujpest 1 Vasas 1.
Aug 29: Nyiregyhaza 1 Gyor 0.
Aug 31: Vasas 0 Diosgyor 0.
Sep 1: Gyor 1 Sopron 1; Tatabanya 2 Paks 4; Rakospalota 0 Fehervar 2; Kaposvar 4 Siofok 3; Nyiregyhaza 1 Ujpest 2.
Sep 2: Honved 3 Debrecen 1.
Sep 3: MTK 4 Zalaegerszeg 1.
Sep 14: Debrecen 2 Vasas 0.
Sep 15: Fehervar 2 Sopron 0; Paks 0 Rakospalota 2; Ujpest 3 Tatabanya 0; Diosgyor 0 Nyiregyhaza 0; Siofok 1 Honved 2; Zalaegerszeg 2 Kaposvar 1.
Sep 17: MTK 2 Gyor 2.

HUNGARY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Honved	8	6	1	1	20	9	19
Fehervar	8	5	1	2	19	10	16
MTK	8	4	4	0	18	9	16
Debrecen	8	5	1	2	17	10	16
Ujpest	8	4	3	1	15	8	15
Zalaegerszeg	8	4	2	2	15	11	14
Gyor	8	3	3	2	8	8	12
Kaposvar	8	3	3	2	12	13	12
Nyiregyhaza	8	3	2	3	6	7	11
Vasas	8	3	2	3	11	13	11
Sopron	8	2	3	3	6	9	9
Rakospalota	8	3	0	5	9	13	9
Paks	8	2	0	6	12	19	6
Siofok	8	1	2	5	11	15	5
Diosgyor	8	0	5	3	7	14	5
Tatabanya	8	0	0	8	6	24	0

ITALY

Saturday, August 25
Juventus 5 (Trezeguet 29, 87, 90, Iaquinta pen 71, 86)
Livorno 1 (Loviso 90) Att: 21,414

Lazio 2 (Pandev 56, Rocchi 61)
Torino 2 (Rosina 34, Vailatti 68) Att: 21,495

Sunday, August 26
Fiorentina 3 (Pazzini 56, Mutu 63, Montolivo 70)
Empoli 1 (Saudati 90) Att: 31,280

Genoa 0
Milan 3 (Ambrosini 21, Kaka 44, pen 45) Att: 23,533

Inter 1 (Stankovic 9)
Udinese 1 (Cordoba og 90) Att: 42,797

Napoli 0
Cagliari 2 (Matri 49, Foggia 59) Att: 39,026

Palermo 0
Roma 2 (Mexes 4, Aquilani 27) Att: 32,202

Parma 2 (Pisanu 28, Rossi 43)
Catania 2 (Morimoto 12, Baiocco 44) Att: 12,579

Reggina 1 (Amoruso 78)
Atalanta 1 (Doni pen 85) Att: 12,963

Siena 1 (Corvia 65)
Sampdoria 2 (Bellucci 34, Montella 84) Att: 10,768

Saturday, September 1
Empoli 0
Inter 2 (Ibrahimovic 14, 83) Att: 10,000

Sunday, September 2
Atalanta 2 (Zampagna pen 21, Carozzieri 65)
Parma 0 Att: 10,141

Cagliari 2 (Foggia pen 56, pen 81)
Juventus 3 (Trezeguet 54, Del Piero 77, Chiellini 90) Att: 23,000

Catania 0
Genoa 0 Att: 15,987

Livorno 2 (Rossini 54, Grandoni 74)
Palermo 4 (Rinaudo 9, Miccoli 22, 37, Amauri 41) Att: 8,475

Roma 3 (Aquilani 17, Giuly 82, Totti 89)
Siena 0 Att: 44,037

Sampdoria 0
Lazio 0 Att: 20,564

Torino 2 (Rosina 45, Ventola 58)
Reggina 2 (Amoruso 31, Cozza 90) Att: 12,403

Udinese 0
Napoli 5 (Zalayeta 16, 70, Domizzi 41, Lavezzi 65, Sosa 81) Att: 16,197

Monday, September 3
Milan 1 (Kaka pen 27)
Fiorentina 1 (Mutu 56) Att: 61,559

Saturday, September 15
Lazio 0
Empoli 0 Att: 18,000

Siena 1 (Maccarone 24)
Milan 1 (Nesta 90) Att: 8,500

Sunday, September 16
Fiorentina 2 (Rivalta og 25, Vieri 74)
Atalanta 2 (Doni 51, Zampagna 86) Att: 28,383

Genoa 1 (Borriello 58)
Livorno 1 (Tavano pen 53) Att: 23,569

Inter 2 (Crespo 15, Cesar 79)
Catania 0 Att: 41,720

Juventus 0
Udinese 1 (Di Natale 47) Att: 20,414

Napoli 2 (Zalayeta 43, Hamsik 76)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 43,490

Palermo 1 (Simplicio 4)
Torino 1 (Recoba 54) Att: 25,987

Parma 1 (Corradi 72)
Cagliari 1 (Matri 40) Att: 12,853

Reggina 0
Roma 2 (Juan 51, Totti 85) Att: 14,030

ITALY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Roma	3	3	0	0	7	0	9
Inter	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
Napoli	3	2	0	1	7	2	6
Juventus	3	2	0	1	8	4	6
Milan	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
Fiorentina	3	1	2	0	6	4	5
Atalanta	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Cagliari	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Palermo	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Sampdoria	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Udinese	3	1	1	1	2	6	4
Torino	3	0	3	0	5	5	3
Lazio	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
Parma	3	0	2	1	3	5	2
Reggina	3	0	2	1	3	5	2
Catania	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Genoa	3	0	2	1	1	4	2
Siena	3	0	1	2	2	6	1
Empoli	3	0	1	2	1	5	1
Livorno	3	0	1	2	4	10	1

LEADING GOALSCORERS
4 David Trezeguet (Juventus)
3 Pasquale Foggia (Cagliari)
3 Kaka (Milan)
3 Marcelo Zalayeta (Napoli)

NORWAY

Aug 25: Rosenborg 2 Valerenga 0.
Aug 26: Lillestrom 7 Aalesund 0; Odd Grenland 1 Viking 3; Fredrikstad 2 Tromso 1; Lyn 1 Stromsgodset 0; Start 1 Brann 1.
Aug 27: Sandefjord 2 Stabaek 3.
Sep 1: Stromsgodset 1 Rosenborg 1.
Sep 2: Aalesund 3 Lyn 1; Viking 1 Lillestrom 1; Valerenga 3 Start 2; Brann 1 Sandefjord 0; Tromso 2 Odd Grenland 4.
Sep 3: Stabaek 0 Fredrikstad 2.
Sep 15: Start 2 Rosenborg 1.
Sep 16: Lillestrom 0 Tromso 3; Odd Grenland 1 Stabaek 5; Fredrikstad 0 Brann 4; Lyn 2 Viking 3; Sandefjord 1 Valerenga 3.
Sep 17: Aalesund 3 Stromsgodset 2.

NORWAY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brann	20	13	3	4	41	30	42
Lillestrom	20	10	6	4	37	17	36
Stabaek	20	10	6	4	33	27	36
Viking	20	10	5	5	37	31	35
Rosenborg	20	8	5	7	38	29	29
Fredrikstad	20	7	8	5	29	29	29
Tromso	20	8	3	9	33	33	27
Valerenga	20	7	6	7	23	24	27
Aalesund	20	8	3	9	32	41	27
Lyn	20	7	4	9	31	34	25
Stromsgodset	20	6	4	10	24	34	22
Start	20	4	7	9	25	33	19
Odd Grenland	20	5	3	12	25	31	18
Sandefjord	20	4	3	13	24	39	15

POLAND

Aug 24: Lech 1 Widzew 0.
Aug 25: Jagiellonia 1 Gornik Zabrze 1; Belchatow 0 Wisla Krakow 0; Cracovia 0 LKS 0; Legia 5 Zaglebie Sosnowiec 0; Polonia Bytom 0 Groclin 2; Odra 1 Zaglebie Lubin 3.
Aug 26: Ruch Chorzow 1 Korona 2.
Aug 31: Zaglebie Lubin 0 Legia 2; Zaglebie Sosnowiec 3 Jagiellonia 1.
Sep 1: Korona 4 Polonia Bytom 0; Gornik Zabrze 1 Cracovia 0; Wisla Krakow 4 Lech 2; Widzew 2 Ruch Chorzow 2.
Sep 2: Groclin 2 LKS 0; Belchatow 3 Odra 1.
Sep 14: Legia 3 Widzew 1; Gornik Zabrze 4 Polonia Bytom 0.
Sep 15: Jagiellonia 0 Korona 0; LKS 3 Zaglebie Sosnowiec 0; Ruch Chorzow 2 Zaglebie Lubin 2; Cracovia 3 Groclin 1; Odra 2 Wisla Krakow 2.
Sep 16: Lech 1 Belchatow 1.

POLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Legia	7	7	0	0	16	1	21
Wisla K	7	5	2	0	16	5	17
Korona	7	4	1	2	9	7	13
Lech	7	3	2	2	13	10	11
Zaglebie L	7	3	2	2	9	8	11
Belchatow	7	2	4	1	6	3	10
Cracovia	7	3	1	3	6	4	10
Groclin	7	3	1	3	9	9	10
Gornik Z	7	3	1	3	8	10	10
Ruch C	7	2	2	3	10	9	8
Jagiellonia	7	2	2	3	6	10	8
LKS	7	1	3	3	5	6	6
Odra	7	1	3	3	8	13	6
Polonia B	7	1	1	5	2	13	4
Widzew	7	0	3	4	6	12	3
Zaglebie S*	7	2	0	5	6	15	2

**4pts deducted for the club's part in Poland's match-fixing scandal*

PORTUGAL

Saturday, August 25

Belenenses 0
Sporting Braga 2 (Cesar Peixoto 24, Vandinho 58)

Benfica 0
Guimaraes 0

Sunday, August 26

Academica 1 (Joeano pen 63)
Uniao Leiria 1 (Joao Paulo 47)

Boavista 0
Maritimo 2 (Kanu 3, 20)

Estrela Amadora 3 (Hugo Cardoso 42, Wagnao 52, Mateus 55)
Naval 1 (Marcelinho 29)

Pacos Ferreira 1 (Edson 55)
Leixoes 1 (Marco Cadete 70)

Porto 1 (Raul Meireles 53)
Sporting Lisbon 0

Monday, August 27

Setubal 1 (Paulinho 20)
Nacional 1 (Lipatin 8)

Friday, August 31

Leixoes 2 (Paulo Machado 5, Vieirinha 35)
Guimaraes 2 (Fajardo 20, 77)

Saturday, September 1

Pacos Ferreira 1 (Cristiano 34)
Boavista 1 (Bangoura 83)

Sporting Braga 2 (Rodriguez 81, Linz 90)
Estrela Amadora 1 (Anselmo 9)

Sunday, September 2

Maritimo 2 (Makukula 4, Bruno 71)
Academica 0

Nacional 0
Benfica 3 (Cardozo 18, pen 77, Rui Costa 69)

Naval 0
Setubal 0

Sporting Lisbon 1 (Liedson 80)
Belenenses 0

Uniao Leiria 0
Porto 3 (Sektioui 37, Lopez 49, Joao Paulo 65)

Friday, September 14

Setubal 3 (Matheus 12, Elias 57, Edinho 82)
Sporting Braga 1 (Cesar Peixoto pen 66)

Saturday, September 15

Benfica 3 (Rodriguez 22, Rui Costa 35, Nuno Gomes 52)
Naval 0

Boavista 0
Leixoes 0

Porto 1 (Lopez 56)
Maritimo 0

Sunday, September 16

Academica 1 (Helder Barbosa 86)
Pacos Ferreira 0
Belenenses 2 (Evandro 52, Hugo Alcantara 71)
Uniao Leiria 1 (Joao Paulo 12)

Estrela Amadora 0
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Liedson 8, Vukcevic 29)

Monday, September 17

Guimaraes 1 (Tiago Targino 81)
Nacional 0

PORTUGAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	4	4	0	0	7	1	12
Maritimo	4	3	0	1	7	2	9
Sporting Lisbon	4	3	0	1	7	2	9
Benfica	4	2	2	0	7	1	8
Setubal	4	1	3	0	5	3	6
Guimaraes	4	1	3	0	4	3	6
Sporting Braga	4	2	0	2	6	6	6
Leixoes	4	0	4	0	4	4	4
E Amadora	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Belenenses	4	1	1	2	3	5	4
Academica	4	1	1	2	3	7	4
Boavista	4	0	3	1	1	3	3
Pacos Ferreira	4	0	2	2	3	6	2
Uniao Leiria	4	0	2	2	2	6	2
Nacional	4	0	2	2	1	5	2
Naval	4	0	2	2	2	7	2

LEADING GOALSCORERS
3 Fajardo (Guimaraes)
3 Liedson (Sporting Lisbon)
3 Ariza Makukula (Maritimo)

ROMANIA

Aug 24: Ceahlaul 1 Poli Iasi 0; Univ Craiova 0 Urziceni 1.
Aug 25: Otelul 2 UTA 1; Univ Cluj 2 Vaslui 3; Gloria Buzau 1 CFR Cluj 2.
Aug 26: Gloria Bistrita 1 Dacia 0; Poli Timisoara 1 Rapid 1.
Aug 31: Pandurii 3 Gloria Buzau 0.
Sep 1: UTA 2 Poli Timisoara 3; Poli Iasi 1 Farul 1; Rapid 2 Univ Craiova 0; Dinamo 0 Gloria Bistrita 1.
Sep 2: Vaslui 2 Otelul 0; CFR Cluj 2 Ceahlaul 1; Urziceni 1 Steaua 0; Dacia 1 Univ Cluj 0.
Sep 14: Gloria Buzau 0 Urziceni 0.
Sep 15: Univ Craiova 0 UTA 1; Poli Iasi 2 Dinamo 5; Poli Timisoara 2 Vaslui 1; Otelul 3 Dacia 1; Univ Cluj 2 Gloria Bistrita 2.
Sep 16: Steaua 0 Rapid 0; Ceahlaul 2 Pandurii 1; Farul 0 CFR Cluj 2.

ROMANIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CFR Cluj	7	5	2	0	12	5	17
Rapid	7	4	3	0	13	7	15
Vaslui	7	4	2	1	14	8	14
Urziceni	7	4	2	1	13	8	14
Poli Timisoara	7	4	2	1	15	12	14
Gloria Bistrita	7	3	3	1	10	9	12
Steaua	6	3	2	1	4	2	11
Dinamo	6	3	1	2	11	7	10
Pandurii	6	3	1	2	9	6	10
Ceahlaul	7	3	0	4	9	10	9
Otelul	7	3	0	4	10	12	9
UTA	7	2	2	3	9	10	8
Poli Iasi	7	2	1	4	9	12	7
Dacia	7	1	2	4	6	10	5
Farul	6	1	1	4	3	9	4
Gloria Buzau	7	1	1	5	3	14	4
Univ Cluj	7	0	3	4	9	13	3
Univ Craiova	7	1	0	6	6	11	3

RUSSIA

Aug 25: Lokomotiv 0 Saturn 2; Tom 3 Luch-Energiya 1; Rubin 3 Spartak Moscow 1; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Zenit 3.
Aug 26: CSKA 4 Rostov 0; Khimki 1 FC Moscow 3; Spartak Nalchik 4 Dinamo 1; Kuban 1 Amkar 1.
Aug 31: Dinamo 3 Tom 1; FC Moscow 1 Spartak Nalchik 0.
Sep 1: Saturn 1 Khimki 0; Luch-Energiya 0 Kryliya Sovetov 0; Amkar 2 Rubin 1.
Sep 2: Rostov 0 Lokomotiv 2; Spartak Moscow 1 CSKA 1; Zenit 1 Kuban 0.

RUSSIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spartak M	23	12	7	4	35	23	43
Zenit	23	12	7	4	39	28	43
FC Moscow	23	11	6	6	28	25	39
Dinamo	23	10	6	7	32	25	36
CSKA	23	8	11	4	30	20	35
Amkar	23	8	10	5	25	21	34
Saturn	23	8	10	5	25	21	34
Lokomotiv	23	9	6	8	30	31	33
Rubin	22	8	4	10	24	23	28
Spartak N	22	6	8	8	22	25	26
Khimki	23	5	10	8	21	23	25
Kuban	23	5	10	8	19	27	25
Kryliya S	23	6	6	11	22	32	24
Tom	23	5	9	9	28	30	24
Luch-Energiya	23	5	7	11	19	27	22
Rostov	23	1	11	11	15	35	14

SCOTLAND

Saturday, August 25

Celtic 5 (Berra og 9, Donati 22, S Brown 61, Vennegoor of Hesselink pen 63, Nakamura 79)
Hearts 0 Att: 57,300

Falkirk 0
St Mirren 1 (Mehmet 90) Att: 5,626

Gretna 1 (Osman 18)
Motherwell 2 (Lasley 8, Porter 62) Att: 3,758

Hibernian 3 (Zemmama 5, Fletcher 70, Shiels 84)
Aberdeen 3 (Brewster 18, 37, Jamie Smith 57) Att: 15,280

Inverness 0
Dundee United 3 (Dillon 47, Robson pen 58, 81) Att: 4,178

Kilmarnock 1 (Invincible 61)
Rangers 2 (Beasley 52, Darcheville 76) Att: 11,544

Saturday, September 1

Dundee United 2 (Hunt 58, Robson 84)
Falkirk 0 Att: 6,864

Hibernian 1 (Fletcher pen 2)
Inverness 0 Att: 13,258

Kilmarnock 0
Aberdeen 1 (Miller 54) Att: 5,814

Rangers 4 (Boyd 38, Webster 63, Cuellar 81, Collin og 83)
Gretna 0 Att: 49,689

Sunday, September 2

St Mirren 1 (Miranda 75)
Celtic 5 (S Brown 22, McDonald 25, Vennegoor of Hesselink 53, Miranda og 56, McManus 74) Att: 7,840

Monday, September 3

Motherwell 0
Hearts 2 (Kingston 24, Velicka 90) Att: 5,081

Saturday, September 15

Aberdeen 1 (Jamie Smith 65)
Motherwell 2 (Quinn 34, Porter 37) Att: 10,154

Celtic 5 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 15, 59, Donati 41, Nakamura 56, McGuire og 70)
Inverness 0 Att: 56,020

Falkirk 1 (Moutinho 47)
Hibernian 1 (Donaldson pen 5) Att: 6,298

Gretna 1 (Skelton 90)
Kilmarnock 2 (Gibson 4, Jarvis 36) Att: 1,516

Hearts 4 (Driver 13, Tall 27, Stewart pen 66, Ivaskevicius 70)
Rangers 2 (Cousin pen 49, Beasley 74) Att: 15,948

Sunday, September 16

Dundee United 2 (Hunt 38, Robertson 68)
St Mirren 0 Att: 6,128

SCOTLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	6	5	1	0	22	3	16
Rangers	6	5	0	1	20	7	15
Dundee Utd	6	4	1	1	9	2	13
Hibernian	6	3	3	0	10	6	12
Motherwell	6	4	0	2	8	7	12
Kilmarnock	6	3	1	2	7	6	10
Hearts	6	2	2	2	8	10	8
St Mirren	6	2	0	4	4	11	6
Aberdeen	6	1	2	3	7	10	5
Falkirk	6	1	1	4	8	15	4
Gretna	6	0	1	5	5	17	1
Inverness	6	0	0	6	2	16	0

LEADING GOALSCORER
5 Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (Celtic)

SERBIA

Aug 25: Bezanija 0 Mladost Lucani 0; Smederevo 1 Cukaricki 0.
Aug 26: Borac 1 Napredak 0; Vojvodina 1 OFK 1; Partizan 4 Banat 2.
Sep 1: Cukaricki 2 Banat 1; Smederevo 1 Hajduk Kula 0; Red Star 2 Bezanija 0; Mladost Lucani 1 Borac 0.
Sep 2: Napredak 0 Vojvodina 1; OFK 0 Partizan 1.
Sep 9: Borac 0 Banat 0.
Sep 15: Vojvodina 2 Mladost Lucani 1; Borac 0 Red Star 0; Bezanija 2 Smederevo 0; Hajduk Kula 1 Cukaricki 1; Banat 2 OFK 1.
Sep 16: Partizan 3 Napredak 1.

SERBIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	5	5	0	0	12	3	15
Red Star	4	2	2	0	3	0	8
Vojvodina	5	2	2	1	5	4	8
OFK	5	2	1	2	6	5	7
Smederevo	5	2	1	2	2	3	7
Mladost L	5	1	3	1	2	2	6
Hajduk K	4	1	2	1	3	2	5
Banat	5	1	2	2	6	8	5
Borac	5	1	2	2	1	3	5
Cukaricki	5	1	2	2	3	6	5
Bezanija	5	1	1	3	3	5	4
Napredak	5	1	0	4	2	7	3

SPAIN

Saturday, August 25

Murcia 2 (Mejia 16, Fernando Baiano 68)
Zaragoza 1 (Ricardo Oliveira 29) Att: 22,000

Real Madrid 2 (Raul 15, Sneijder 80)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Aguero 1) Att: 78,000

Sevilla 4 (Jesus Navas 45, Luis Fabiano 66, Kanoute 69, Kerzhakov 81)
Getafe 1 (Pablo 2) Att: 45,000

Sunday, August 26

Athletic Bilbao 0
Osasuna 0 Att: 40,000

Deportivo La Coruna 0
Almeria 3 (Negredo 18, Soriano 33, Crusat 50) Att: 20,000

Espanyol 0
Valladolid 1 (Llorente 54) Att: 26,000

Mallorca 3 (Ibagaza pen 24, 71, Guiza 56)
Levante 0 Att: 21,000

Racing Santander 0
Barcelona 0 Att: 24,000

Recreativo 1 (Sinama-Pongolle 25)
Betis 1 (Nano 39) Att: 19,000

Valencia 0
Villarreal 3 (Tomasson 15, Rossi pen 62, Cazorla 72) Att: 45,000

Saturday, September 1

Levante 0
Murcia 0 Att: 12,000

Zaragoza 1 (Ricardo Oliveira 75)
Racing Santander 1 (Serrano 55) Att: 33,000

Sunday, September 2

Almeria 1 (Negredo 63)
Valencia 2 (Morientes 46, Moretti 80) Att: 10,000

Atletico Madrid 1 (Pernia 77)
Mallorca 1 (Guiza 18) Att: 40,000

Barcelona 3 (Ronaldinho 8, pen 35, Toure 72)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Susaeta 70) Att: 70,000

Betis 2 (Fernando 84, Rafael Sobis 85)
Espanyol 2 (Luis Garcia 33, 41) Att: 35,000

Getafe 1 (Del Moral 90)
Recreativo 1 (Sinama-Pongolle 85) Att: 12,000

Valladolid 2 (Garcia Calvo 45, Sisi 72)
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Taborda 53, Riki 78) Att: 20,000

Villarreal 0
Real Madrid 5 (Raul 38, Sneijder 48, 73, Van Nistelrooy 50, Guti 80) Att: 23,000

Saturday, September 15
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Susaeta 8)
Zaragoza 1 (Milito 15) Att: 40,000

Real Madrid 3 (Saviola 36, Sneijder 68, Higuain 87)
Almeria 1 (Uche 72) Att: 73,000

Valencia 2 (Morientes 23, Silva 89)
Valladolid 1 (Ngom Kome 10) Att: 40,000

Sunday, September 16
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Guardado 7)
Betis 0 Att: 10,000

Espanyol 1 (Jonathan 87)
Getafe 0 Att: 18,750

Mallorca 0
Villarreal 1 (Nihat 82) Att: 17,000

Murcia 1 (Gallardo 80)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Aguero 14) Att: 32,000

Osasuna 0
Barcelona 0 Att: 17,933

Racing Santander 1 (Munitis 27)
Levante 0 Att: 15,323

Sevilla 4 (Kerzhakov 11, 74, Kanoute 30, 53)
Recreativo 1 (Aitor 54) Att: 45,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	3	3	0	0	10	2	9
Sevilla	2	2	0	0	8	2	6
Valencia	3	2	0	1	4	5	6
Villarreal	3	2	0	1	4	5	6
Barcelona	3	1	2	0	3	1	5
Murcia	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
R Santander	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
Mallorca	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Valladolid	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Espanyol	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Dep La Coruna	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Almeria	3	1	0	2	5	5	3
Osasuna	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Atletico Madrid	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Betis	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Zaragoza	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Athletic Bilbao	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Recreativo	3	0	2	1	3	6	2
Getafe	3	0	1	2	2	6	1
Levante	3	0	1	2	0	4	1

LEADING GOALSCORERS
4 Wesley Sneijder (Real Madrid)
3 Frederic Kanoute (Sevilla)
3 Alexander Kerzhakov (Sevilla)

SWEDEN

Aug 25: Elfsborg 0 Helsingborgs 0; Brommapojkarna 0 Hammarby 2.
Aug 26: AIK 3 Malmo 1; Trelleborgs 0 Orebro 0.
Aug 27: GAIS 1 Gefle 0; Djurgardens 1 Kalmar 3.
Aug 28: Halmstads 1 IFK Gothenburg 3.
Sep 1: Malmo 0 Trelleborgs 0.
Sep 2: Kalmar 3 Halmstads 0; IFK Gothenburg 0 Brommapojkarna 0.
Sep 3: Orebro 2 GAIS 1; Helsingborgs 1 Djurgardens 4; Hammarby 1 AIK 2; Gefle 2 Elfsborg 2.
Sep 15: Hammarby 4 Gefle 3; IFK Gothenburg 2 Elfsborg 2.
Sep 16: Kalmar 2 GAIS 2; Helsingborgs 1 Brommapojkarna 1; Halmstads 2 AIK 2.
Sep 17: Djurgardens 1 Trelleborgs 1; Malmo 1 Orebro 0.

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Djurgardens	21	10	6	5	30	20	36
Elfsborg	21	9	8	4	34	23	35
AIK	21	10	5	6	29	23	35
IFK Goth'burg	21	9	7	5	36	23	34
Kalmar	21	10	3	8	31	29	33
Halmstads	21	9	6	6	30	28	33
Malmo	21	8	7	6	25	19	31
Hammarby	21	9	3	9	29	24	30
Helsingborgs	21	7	7	7	34	28	28
GAIS	21	6	7	8	21	29	25
Gefle	21	6	6	9	21	26	24
Orebro	21	4	7	10	19	33	19
Trelleborgs	21	4	6	11	19	32	18
Bromm'karna	21	4	6	11	16	37	18

SWITZERLAND

Aug 25: Neuchatel Xamax 2 Aarau 1; Zurich 5 Young Boys 1; Lucerne 2 Basle 4.
Aug 26: Thun 1 Grasshopper 0; St Gallen 1 Sion 0.
Sep 1: Grasshopper 1 Neuchatel Xamax 2; Aarau 1 Zurich 1.
Sep 2: Young Boys 3 St Gallen 1; Basle 2 Thun 1.
Sep 3: Lucerne 1 Sion 1.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zurich	8	5	2	1	22	7	17
Basle	8	5	1	2	15	13	16
Neuchatel X	8	3	4	1	12	9	13
Young Boys	8	3	3	2	16	15	12
Sion	8	3	2	3	9	11	11
Grasshopper	8	2	2	4	12	12	8
Aarau	8	1	5	2	11	12	8
Lucerne	8	1	5	2	12	16	8
Thun	8	2	2	4	7	12	8
St Gallen	8	2	0	6	6	15	6

TURKEY

Aug 25: Fenerbahce 1 Sivasspor 0; Genclerbirligi 1 Bursaspor 3; Istanbul BB 1 Genclerbirligi Oftas 0; Gaziantepspor 0 Besiktas 1.
Aug 26: Trabzonspor 5 Rizespor 1; Ankaraspor 1 Konyaspor 1; Kayserispor 2 Kasimpasa 0; Denizlispor 3 Manisaspor 2; Galatasaray 1 Ankaragucu 0.
Aug 31: Bursaspor 1 Trabzonspor 1.
Sep 1: Ankaragucu 2 Genclerbirligi 2; Konyaspor 2 Denizlispor 2; Rizespor 3 Istanbul BB 1; Besiktas 0 Kayserispor 0.
Sep 2: Genclerbirligi Oftas 1 Fenerbahce 1; Kasimpasa 3 Ankaraspor 1; Sivasspor 2 Gaziantepspor 0; Manisaspor 2 Galatasaray 2.
Sep 15: Ankaraspor 0 Besiktas 0; Denizlispor 0 Kasimpasa 1; Fenerbahce 1 Rizespor 1; Sivasspor 1 Genclerbirligi Oftas 0.
Sep 16: Istanbul BB 1 Bursaspor 0; Galatasaray 6 Konyaspor 0; Genclerbirligi 0 Manisaspor 2; Trabzonspor 0 Ankaragucu 0; Gaziantepspor 4 Kayserispor 3.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Galatasaray	5	4	1	0	14	2	13
Besiktas	5	3	2	0	4	1	11
Sivasspor	4	3	0	1	5	2	9
Istanbul BB	5	3	0	2	6	5	9
Trabzonspor	4	2	2	0	8	2	8
Kayserispor	5	2	2	1	9	6	8
Ankaragucu	5	2	2	1	7	6	8
Fenerbahce	5	2	2	1	5	5	8
Manisaspor	5	2	1	2	9	9	7
Gaziantepspor	5	2	0	3	7	8	6
Kasimpasa	5	2	0	3	5	7	6
Bursaspor	5	1	2	2	4	4	5
Denizlispor	5	1	2	2	7	8	5
Genclerbirligi	5	1	1	3	6	9	4
G'ligi Oftas	5	1	1	3	3	6	4
Rizespor	5	1	1	3	5	13	4
Konyaspor	5	0	3	2	4	11	3
Ankaraspor	5	0	2	3	4	8	2

UKRAINE

Aug 24: FC Kharkiv 1 Metalurh D 1.
Aug 25: Kryvbas 0 Dynamo 1; Karpaty 1 Naftovyk 1; Shakhtar 2 Tavriya 0; Metalurh Z 3 Zorya 0.
Aug 26: Chornomorets 1 Vorskla 0; Dnipro 0 Zakarpattya 0; Arsenal 1 Metalist 1.
Aug 31: Tavriya 3 Metalurh D 3.
Sep 1: Zakarpattya 1 Metalurh Z 1; Shakhtar 4 Arsenal 1; Naftovyk 1 Kryvbas 2; Dynamo 2 FC Kharkiv 0.
Sep 2: Zorya 0 Karpaty 1; Vorskla 2 Dnipro 1; Metalist 2 Chornomorets 0.
Sep 14: FC Kharkiv 1 Naftovyk 0.
Sep 15: Metalurh Z 1 Vorskla 1; Metalurh D 1 Dynamo 2; Karpaty 2 Zakarpattya 0; Chornomorets 1 Shakhtar 2.
Sep 16: Arsenal 0 Tavriya 1; Dnipro 3 Metalist 0; Kryvbas 1 Zorya 2.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	9	8	1	0	21	5	25
Dnipro	9	7	1	1	18	5	22
Dynamo	9	5	3	1	17	10	18
Metalurh Z	9	4	3	2	8	6	15
Metalist	9	4	2	3	13	11	14
Tavriya	9	4	2	3	11	13	14
FC Kharkiv	9	3	3	3	6	7	12
Vorskla	9	2	5	2	8	8	11
Karpaty	9	3	2	4	11	12	11
Chornomorets	9	3	2	4	4	7	11
Metalurh D	9	2	4	3	12	12	10
Zorya	9	3	1	5	9	14	10
Zakarpattya	9	2	3	4	4	12	9
Arsenal	9	2	2	5	17	16	8
Kryvbas	9	2	1	6	8	15	7
Naftovyk	9	0	1	8	2	16	1

SOUTH AMERICA

ARGENTINA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, August 24
Racing Club 2 (Sava pen 66, Lopez 89)
Newell's Old Boys 0

Tigre 0
Colon Santa Fe 2 (Gandin 24, Gonzalez 36)

Saturday, August 25
Argentinos Juniors 0
Independiente 1 (Denis 76)

Arsenal 0
Banfield 4 (Herner 18, Luchetti 29, Cvitanich 53, 75)

Estudiantes 1 (Moreno y Fabianesi 90)
San Lorenzo 1 (Aguirre 41)

Lanus 2 (Sand pen 13, Biglieri 88)
Olimpo 1 (Gonzalez 43)

Rosario Central 0
Huracan 1 (Mendoza 43)

Sunday, August 26
Boca Juniors 2 (Palacio 48, Ledesma pen 90)
Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Dominguez 50)

San Martin 1 (Brusco 76)
River Plate 0

Velez Sarsfield 4 (Uglessich 26, Sena 48, 88, Balvorin 81)
Gimnasia Jujuy 2 (Uglessich og 36, Silva 76)

Tuesday, August 28
Banfield 1 (Luchetti pen 24)
Lanus 2 (Sand 35, 45)

Colon Santa Fe 2 (Gandin 12, Romero 66)
Rosario Central 0

Olimpo 0
Tigre 1 (Lazzaro 82)

San Lorenzo 4 (Silvera 37, 47, Romeo 86, 91)
Racing Club 3 (Torres og 1, Avalos 21, Pellerano 28)

Wednesday, August 29
Gimnasia Jujuy 1 (Miranda 74)
Arsenal 0

Gimnasia La Plata 2 (Leguizamon 2, Salvatierra 48)
San Martin 0

Huracan 3 (Mendoza 11, Nieto 47, Sanchez 89)
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Hauche 1, Cabrera 69)

Independiente 2 (Denis 2, Matheu 73)
Boca Juniors 3 (Rodriguez og 17, Palermo 47, Gracian 68)

Newell's Old Boys 2 (Da Silva 9, Seri 45)
Velez Sarsfield 0

River Plate 4 (Belluschi 7, Ruben 23, Sanchez 81, Falcao Garcia 90)
Estudiantes 2 (Benitez 2, Salgueiro 80)

Friday, August 31
Rosario Central 1 (Arzuaga 12)
Olimpo 1 (Lujambio 63)

Tigre 1 (Lazzaro 16)
Banfield 0

Saturday, September 1
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Ortigoza pen 12, Chitzoff og 35)
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Cardetti 90)

Arsenal 1 (Ulloa 24)
Newell's Old Boys 0

Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Salvatierra 49)
Independiente 0

Lanus 2 (Aguirre 24, Valeri pen 66)
Gimnasia Jujuy 0

Sunday, September 2
Boca Juniors 1 (Ledesma pen 77)
Huracan 0

Racing Club 1 (Sava pen 35)
River Plate 1 (Lussenhoff 79)

San Martin 1 (Tonelotto 58)
Estudiantes 0

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Zapata 69, Silva 90)
San Lorenzo 0

Wednesday, September 5
River Plate 3 (Ortega pen 20, Falcao Garcia 51, Abelairas 74)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Da Silva 68)

Friday, September 7
Banfield 3 (Patino 85, Pavlovich 90, Luchetti 90)
Rosario Central 2 (Arzuaga 17, Costa pen 53)

Gimnasia Jujuy 0
Tigre 2 (Ayala 45, Lazzaro 67)

Olimpo 1 (Pinto 46)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Ortigoza pen 59)

Saturday, September 8
Huracan 0
Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Escobar 10)

Independiente 2 (Sosa 45, Montenegro 72)
San Martin 2 (Herrera 20, 44)

Newell's Old Boys 0
Lanus 0

Sunday, September 9
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Grisales 90)
Boca Juniors 0

Estudiantes 2 (Dominguez 50, Desabato 57)
Racing Club 1 (Lopez 66)

River Plate 5 (Rios 23, Belluschi 45, 61, 83, Fernandez 70)
Velez Sarsfield 0

San Lorenzo 2 (Torres 14, Silvera 42)
Arsenal 4 (Calderon pen 41, 86, Andrizzi 74, Villar 83)

Tuesday, September 11
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Pereira 80, Cabrera 85)
Banfield 0

Independiente 3 (Sosa 28, Denis 30, 71)
Huracan 0

Rosario Central 1 (Belloso 51)
Gimnasia Jujuy 1 (Silva 74)

Tigre 2 (Lazzaro 3, 82)
Newell's Old Boys 2 (Salcedo 21, Schiavi 45)

Wednesday, September 12
Arsenal 2 (Matellan 54, Gandolfi 89)
River Plate 1 (Ruben 24)

Boca Juniors 2 (Palacio 8, Palermo pen 85)
Olimpo 0

Lanus 4 (Sand pen 34, Valeri 38, Acosta 43, Pelletieri 68)
San Lorenzo 3 (Romeo 47, 84, Gonzalez 75)

San Martin 0
Racing Club 2 (Lopez 84, Malano 89)

Velez Sarsfield 1 (Balvorin 7)
Estudiantes 0

Saturday, September 15

Colon Santa Fe 1 (Rodriguez og 41)
Independiente 3 (Matheu 21, Denis 35, 61)

Estudiantes 1 (Benitez 77)
Arsenal 1 (Ulloa 90)

Gimnasia Jujuy 1 (Silva 90)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Pereira 55)

Huracan 2 (Varaldo 40, Sanchez Prette 64)
San Martin 1 (Brusco pen 68)

Olimpo 0
Gimnasia La Plata 0

Racing Club 1 (Avalos 90)
Velez Sarsfield 0

Sunday, September 16

Banfield 0
Boca Juniors 6 (Palermo 6, 22, pen 27, 47, Gracian 37, Ledesma pen 80)

Newell's Old Boys 0
Rosario Central 1 (Arzuaga pen 74)

River Plate 3 (Belluschi 43, 76, Sanchez 47)
Lanus 1 (Sand 67)

San Lorenzo 2 (Hirsig 19, Silvera 55)
Tigre 1 (Lazzaro pen 65)

ARGENTINA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Independiente	9	6	1	2	20	10	19
Boca Juniors	9	6	1	2	17	7	19
River Plate	9	4	3	2	20	11	15
Velez Sarsfield	9	5	0	4	11	11	15
Argentinos Jrs	9	4	2	3	13	10	14
Lanus	9	4	2	3	16	16	14
Arsenal	9	4	2	3	11	11	14
Tigre	9	4	2	3	8	9	14
Racing Club	9	4	1	4	13	10	13
Colon Santa Fe	8	4	0	4	9	9	12
Huracan	9	3	3	3	8	10	12
Banfield	9	4	0	5	10	16	12
Estudiantes	9	3	2	4	11	11	11
Gimnasia LP	8	3	2	3	7	7	11
Newell's OB	9	3	2	4	8	10	11
San Lorenzo	9	3	2	4	15	18	11
San Martin	9	3	1	5	7	11	10
Gimnasia J	9	2	3	4	9	14	9
Rosario Central	9	1	4	4	7	11	7
Olimpo	9	1	3	5	4	12	6

LEADING GOALSCORER
11 German Denis (Independiente)

BOLIVIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 25: San Jose 1 Blooming 1.
Aug 26: The Strongest 5 Destroyers 0; Universitario 2 Aurora 0; Real Mamore 2 Bolivar 1; Jorge Wilstermann 2 Real Potosi 2.
Aug 29: Oriente 1 La Paz 0.
Sep 1: Aurora 0 San Jose 1; Bolivar 2 Oriente 0.
Sep 2: La Paz 0 Jorge Wilstermann 0; Real Potosi 2 Real Mamore 0; Destroyers 0 Universitario 0; Blooming 0 The Strongest 0.
Sep 5: San Jose 2 Aurora 2; Universitario 4 Destroyers 1; Jorge Wilstermann 0 La Paz 2; Oriente 0 Bolivar 1.
Sep 6: Real Mamore 1 Real Potosi 1; The Strongest 1 Blooming 0.
Sep 16: La Paz 1 Real Potosi 0; Aurora 0 The Strongest 0; Universitario 1 San Jose 1; Bolivar 2 Jorge Wilstermann 3; Real Mamore 4 Oriente 0; Blooming 2 Destroyers 1.
Sep 19: Blooming 3 Aurora 0; Destroyers 4 San Jose 3; Real Potosi 2 Oriente 0; La Paz 1 Bolivar 2.

BOLIVIA – CLOSING – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Blooming	9	5	2	2	11	7	17
The Strongest	8	4	3	1	15	6	15
Universitario	8	3	3	2	14	10	12
San Jose	9	3	3	3	15	15	12
Aurora	9	2	3	4	8	13	9
Destroyers	9	2	1	6	11	22	7

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
La Paz	9	6	1	2	9	3	19
Real Potosi	9	3	3	3	13	9	12
Bolivar	9	4	0	5	12	15	12
J Wilstermann	8	3	2	3	11	11	11
Real Mamore	8	3	1	4	10	9	10
Oriente	9	3	0	6	6	15	9

BRAZIL

Aug 25: Corinthians 0 Cruzeiro 3; Internacional 1 Atletico Paranaense 0; Fluminense 1 Gremio 1.
Aug 26: Parana 3 Juventude 1; America 1 Santos 4; Sport Recife 0 Vasco da Gama 0; Atletico Mineiro 1 Botafogo 2; Sao Paulo 5 Nautico 0; Figueirense 1 Palmeiras 2; Flamengo 3 Goias 1.
Aug 29: Palmeiras 0 Sao Paulo 1; Parana 2 Cruzeiro 2; Juventude 2 Goias 0; Botafogo 1 Flamengo 1; Sport Recife 2 Gremio 0; Atletico Mineiro 5 Corinthians 2; Figueirense 3 America 1; Internacional 1 Fluminense 4.
Aug 30: Santos 3 Atletico Paranaense 1; Vasco da Gama 4 Nautico 1.
Sep 1: Sao Paulo 6 Parana 0; America 0 Juventude 3; Flamengo 1 Sport Recife 1.
Sep 2: Corinthians 2 Santos 0; Atletico Paranaense 1 Atletico Mineiro 0; Goias 2 Figueirense 1; Fluminense 1 Vasco da Gama 1; Nautico 1 Internacional 1; Cruzeiro 5 Palmeiras 0; Gremio 3 Botafogo 0.
Sep 5: Corinthians 1 America 0; Goias 2 Atletico Paranaense 3; Atletico Mineiro 0 Sao Paulo 0; Santos 2 Internacional 1; Juventude 1 Cruzeiro 0; Gremio 3 Vasco da Gama 1; Flamengo 4 Figueirense 1.
Sep 6: Botafogo 1 Palmeiras 1; Sport Recife 0 Fluminense 2; Parana 2 Nautico 4.
Sep 8: Cruzeiro 2 Gremio 0; Santos 1 Juventude 0; Figueirense 2 Atletico Mineiro 1; Internacional 3 Flamengo 0; Vasco da Gama 0 Sao Paulo 2.
Sep 9: Palmeiras 2 Goias 0; Parana 1 Corinthians 0; America 1 Sport Recife 1; Fluminense 2 Atletico Paranaense 0; Nautico 4 Botafogo 1.
Sep 12: Flamengo 3 Cruzeiro 1.
Sep 15: Fluminense 2 America 0; Goias 0 Nautico 3; Sao Paulo 2 Santos 1.
Sep 16: Atletico Mineiro 3 Cruzeiro 4; Atletico Paranaense 2 Palmeiras 1; Figueirense 4 Juventude 1; Flamengo 1 Vasco da Gama 1; Gremio 1 Internacional 0; Sport Recife 3 Parana 1; Corinthians 0 Botafogo 1.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	26	17	6	3	40	8	57
Cruzeiro	26	15	3	8	61	44	48
Santos	26	13	3	10	39	33	42
Botafogo	26	11	9	6	45	38	42
Gremio	26	12	5	9	28	26	41
Vasco	25	11	7	7	42	29	40
Palmeiras	26	11	7	8	33	34	40
Fluminense	26	10	10	6	35	22	40
Sport Recife	26	10	6	10	40	41	36
Internacional	26	10	5	11	34	34	35
Figueirense	26	9	7	10	41	44	34
Goias	26	10	3	13	33	39	33
Flamengo	25	8	9	8	39	39	33
Corinthians	26	8	9	9	29	36	33
At Mineiro	26	9	5	12	40	39	32
At Paranaense	26	8	8	10	37	38	32
Parana	26	8	7	11	30	41	31
Nautico	26	8	6	12	41	48	30
Juventude	26	7	5	14	29	45	26
America	26	3	2	21	19	57	11

CHILE

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 24: Audax Italiano 2 Coquimbo Unido 1.
Aug 25: Antofagasta 1 Colo Colo 1; Palestino 0 Univ de Concepcion 1; Dep Concepcion 3 Dep Melipilla 1; Santiago Wanderers 0 Huachipato 1.
Aug 26: Puerto Montt 0 Cobreloa 1; Lota Schwager 1 O'Higgins 1; Nubiense 1 Everton 1; Univ de Chile 1 Univ Catolica 2; Cobresal 1 Union Espanola 0.
Aug 31: Univ Catolica 2 Dep Concepcion 3.
Sep 1: Huachipato 1 Audax Italiano 1; Union Espanola 4 Puerto Montt 1; Cobreloa 1 Univ de Chile 1; Colo Colo 3 Nublense 1; O'Higgins 2 Antofagasta 1; Univ de Concepcion 2 Lota Schwager 0.
Sep 2: Coquimbo Unido 1 Cobresal 2; Everton 0 Dep La Serena 1; Dep Melipilla 3 Santiago Wanderers 0.
Sep 8: Cobresal 2 Huachipato 1; O'Higgins 2 Cobreloa 2.
Sep 9: Dep La Serena 2 Coquimbo Unido 2.
Sep 12: Dep Concepcion 1 Cobreloa 4.
Sep 15: Cobresal 2 Univ de Concepcion 2.
Sep 16: Antofagasta 1 Audax Italiano 3; Dep Melipilla 1 Palestino 2; Lota Schwager 0 Colo Colo 1; Nublense 2 Union Espanola 3; Puerto Montt 4 Huachipato 1; Santiago Wanderers 2 Everton 1.

CHILE – CLOSING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	9	5	3	1	19	10	18
Cobresal	9	5	3	1	15	10	18
Dep La Serena	8	3	2	3	9	11	11
S Wanderers	9	3	2	4	8	13	11
Puerto Montt	8	2	1	5	8	12	7

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ Catolica	8	5	1	2	15	8	16
U Concepcion	8	4	4	0	12	6	16
Dep Melipilla	9	3	2	4	11	13	11
D Concepcion	8	3	1	4	14	20	10
U Espanola	9	2	2	5	12	14	8

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Audax Italiano	8	6	2	0	15	7	20
Univ de Chile	8	3	4	1	13	8	13
Cobreloa	8	3	3	2	12	11	12
Palestino	8	2	3	3	12	11	9
Everton	9	0	3	6	5	13	3

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
O'Higgins	8	5	3	0	14	8	18
Huachipato	9	4	1	4	15	15	13
Antofagasta	9	3	2	4	12	10	11
Nublense	9	3	2	4	12	17	11
Coquimbo U	9	1	1	7	8	18	4
L Schwager	8	0	3	5	6	12	3

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 24: Indep Medellin 1 America 3.
Aug 25: Dep Cali 1 At Nacional 1; Once Caldas 0 Tolima 1.
Aug 26: At Huila 0 Chico 0; Cucuta 2 At Junior 0; Dep Pasto 1 Pereira 1; Indep Santa Fe 1 La Equidad 2; Real Cartagena 3 Bucaramanga 1; Quindio 6 Millonarios 1.
Aug 31: Pereira 2 Indep Santa Fe 2.
Sep 1: America 0 Dep Cali 0; Millonarios 0 Dep Pasto 3.
Sep 2: Bucaramanga 0 Indep Medellin 1; At Junior 4 Once Caldas 2; Chico 1 Real Cartagena 1; Tolima 1 Quindio 1; La Equidad 2 At Huila 1; At Nacional 0 Cucuta 1.
Sep 7: Indep Medellin 0 Chico 2.
Sep 8: Cucuta 2 America 0; Dep Cali 1 Bucaramanga 1.
Sep 9: At Huila 0 Indep Santa Fe 0; Quindio 1 At Junior 0; Millonarios 1 Pereira 0; Once Caldas 2 At Nacional 2; Real Cartagena 1 La Equidad 2.
Sep 14: Once Caldas 2 Pereira 2.
Sep 15: Dep Cali 0 America 1.
Sep 16: At Huila 3 Tolima 0; Chico 1 Quindio 0; Cucuta 3 Bucaramanga 1; Indep Medellin 1 At Nacional 4; Indep Santa Fe 0 Millonarios 1; La Equidad 0 Dep Pasto 0; Real Cartagena 1 At Junior 0.

COLOMBIA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
La Equidad	9	6	3	0	14	7	21
At Nacional	9	5	3	1	15	7	18
Tolima	8	5	1	2	13	8	16
Cucuta	9	5	1	3	12	9	16
Dep Pasto	8	4	3	1	15	9	15
Chico	9	4	3	2	9	7	15
Quindio	9	4	2	3	15	10	14
Once Caldas	9	4	2	3	16	14	14
America	9	4	2	3	10	9	14
At Junior	9	4	0	5	13	14	12
Real Cartagena	9	3	1	5	9	12	10
Millonarios	9	3	1	5	9	16	10
Indep Medellin	9	3	0	6	10	17	9
At Huila	9	2	3	4	8	14	9
Indep Santa Fe	9	2	2	5	11	13	8
Dep Cali	9	1	5	3	11	13	8
Pereira	9	1	4	4	9	15	7
Bucaramanga	9	1	2	6	11	16	5

ECUADOR

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 25: El Nacional 0 Dep Quito 0; Imbabura 1 Barcelona 0.
Aug 26: Olmedo 2 Cuenca 1; Dep Azogues 2 Macara 1; Emelec 2 LDU Quito 0.
Aug 29: LDU Quito 5 Imbabura 0; Barcelona 1 Dep Azogues 1; Dep Quito 0 Olmedo 0; Cuenca 2 Emelec 1.
Sep 1: El Nacional 1 Cuenca 1; Emelec 2 Olmedo 0; Imbabura 0 Dep Quito 1.
Sep 2: Dep Azogues 1 LDU Quito 1; Macara 2 Barcelona 2.
Sep 14: Cuenca 3 Imbabura 0.
Sep 15: Olmedo 0 El Nacional 1.
Sep 16: Barcelona 0 Emelec 1; Dep Quito 0 Dep Azogues 2; LDU Quito 2 Macara 0.

ECUADOR – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU Quito	13	7	1	5	21	11	22
Emelec	13	7	1	5	18	13	22
El Nacional	13	6	4	3	16	12	22
Barcelona	13	6	3	4	16	13	21
Dep Quito	13	6	2	5	12	11	20
Cuenca	13	5	3	5	21	17	18
Dep Azogues	13	5	3	5	16	18	18
Olmedo	13	3	4	6	7	13	13
Imbabura	13	3	4	6	9	19	13
Macara	13	2	5	6	13	22	11

PARAGUAY

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 25: 12 de Octubre 2 Cerro Porteno 3.
Aug 26: Nacional 1 Libertad 2; Sportivo Luqueno 0 Tacuary 3; 2 de Mayo 1 Sol de America 2; 3 de Febrero 1 Guarani 0; Sportivo Trinidense 0 Olimpia 0.
Sep 1: Nacional 6 3 de Febrero 2; Olimpia 2 12 de Octubre 3; Libertad 3 2 de Mayo 1.
Sep 2: Sol de America 0 Sportivo Trinidense 0; Cerro Porteno 1 Sportivo Luqueno 0; Tacuary 0 Guarani 1.
Sep 7: 12 de Octubre 0 Sol de America 1; 2 de Mayo 2 Nacional 1; Sportivo Luqueno 1 Olimpia 2.
Sep 8: 3 de Febrero 2 Tacuary 4; Sportivo Trinidense 1 Libertad 2.
Sep 9: Guarani 1 Cerro Porteno 4.
Sep 12: 2 de Mayo 1 3 de Febrero 2; Libertad 1 12 de Octubre 0; Nacional 1 Sportivo Trinidense 1; Olimpia 1 Guarani 0; Sol de America 4 Sportivo Luqueno 2.
Sep 15: 3 de Febrero 0 Cerro Porteno 5.
Sep 16: 12 de Octubre 0 Nacional 1; Guarani 0 Sol de America 0; Sportivo Luqueno 0 Libertad 1; Tacuary 0 Olimpia 1; Sportivo Trinidense 0 2 de Mayo 0.

PARAGUAY – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad	9	8	1	0	16	7	25
Cerro Porteno	8	6	1	1	17	5	19
Olimpia	9	5	3	1	10	5	18
Sol de America	9	3	4	2	12	10	13
Nacional	9	3	3	3	14	11	12
Tacuary	8	4	0	4	10	8	12
3 de Febrero	9	3	2	4	12	20	11
Trinidense	9	1	5	3	5	8	8
2 de Mayo	9	2	2	5	8	12	8
12 de Octubre	9	2	2	5	7	11	8
Guarani	9	2	2	5	5	10	8
Luqueno	9	1	1	7	7	16	4

PERU

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 25: Dep Municipal 1 Total Clean 0; Sport Boys 1 Universitario 1.
Aug 26: Alianza Atletico 1 Sport Ancash 1; Melgar 2 Universidad SMP 1; Alianza Lima 1 Cienciano 2; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Sporting Cristal 1.
Sep 1: Sport Ancash 2 Sport Boys 2; Sporting Cristal 1 Melgar 1.
Sep 2: Cienciano 1 Coronel Bolognesi 0; Universidad SMP 0 Dep Municipal 1; Total Clean 4 Alianza Atletico 1.
Sep 8: Coronel Bolognesi 3 Sport Boys 1.
Sep 9: Sport Ancash 3 Dep Municipal 1.
Sep 15: Sport Boys 3 Total Clean 0; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Alianza Lima 0; Universitario 1 Sport Ancash 2.
Sep 16: Alianza Atletico 2 Universidad SMP 1; Dep Municipal 1 Sporting Cristal 0; Melgar 4 Cienciano 1.

PERU – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dep Municipal	9	5	2	2	11	9	17
Sport Ancash	9	4	3	2	16	11	15
Cienciano	8	4	1	3	11	12	13
C Bolognesi	8	3	3	2	8	4	12
Universitario	7	3	2	2	11	10	11
Univ SMP	8	3	1	4	13	10	10
Sport Boys	8	2	4	2	11	10	10
Melgar	8	2	4	2	7	6	10
Al Atletico	8	2	4	2	8	10	10
Total Clean	8	2	2	4	9	12	8
S Cristal	8	1	3	4	7	12	6
Al Lima	7	1	3	3	5	11	6

URUGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 25: Danubio 3 Miramar 0; Nacional 2 Wanderers 0.
Aug 26: Progreso 0 Juventud 1; Cerro 1 Fenix 1; Liverpool 3 Central Espanol 0; Rampla Jnrs 1 Bella V 0; Tacuarembo 1 Defensor 0; Penarol 3 River Plate 6.
Aug 29: Central Espanol 0 Penarol 4.
Sep 1: Miramar Misiones 1 Liverpool 0; River Plate 0 Cerro 0; Juventud 1 Penarol 1.
Sep 2: Fenix 0 Danubio 0; Bella Vista 1 Tacuarembo 1; Central Espanol 3 Progreso 0; Wanderers 1 Rampla Juniors 2; Defensor 1 Nacional 0.
Sep 5: Miramar Misiones 1 Progreso 0.
Sep 6: Nacional 2 Bella Vista 2.
Sep 7: Defensor 0 Danubio 0; Penarol 0 Wanderers 1; Rampla Juniors 3 River Plate 1.
Sep 8: Progreso 1 Fenix 4.
Sep 9: Cerro 0 Central Espanol 0; Liverpool 1 Juventud 1; Tacuarembo 1 Miramar Misiones 0.
Sep 16: Central Espanol 1 Rampla Juniors 2; Defensor 3 Progreso 0; Miramar Misiones 0 Nacional 1; River Plate 1 Danubio 3; Wanderers 2 Liverpool 0.
Sep 19: Fenix 2 Tacuarembo 0; Bella Vista 2 Penarol 3.

URUGUAY – OPENING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rampla Jnrs	5	4	0	1	9	5	12
Danubio	5	3	2	0	7	1	11
Defensor	5	3	1	1	6	2	10
Fenix	5	2	3	0	8	3	9
Nacional	5	2	2	1	6	4	8
Tacuarembo	5	2	2	1	4	4	8
Penarol	5	2	1	2	11	10	7
River Plate	5	2	1	2	11	11	7
Wanderers	5	2	1	2	5	5	7
Cerro	4	1	3	0	4	1	6
M Misiones	5	2	0	3	2	5	6
Juventud	4	1	2	1	3	3	5
Liverpool	5	1	1	3	6	7	4
C Espanol	5	1	1	3	4	9	4
Bella Vista	5	0	2	3	5	10	2
Progreso	5	0	0	5	1	12	0

VENEZUELA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 25: Carabobo 2 Trujillanos 0; Zamora 0 Caracas 2.
Aug 26: Dep Italia 0 Dep Tachira 0; Estudiantes 1 Llaneros 0; Monagas 4 El Vigia 1; Portuguesa 1 Estrella Roja 2; Union Lara 6 Aragua 4; Anzoategui 3 Guaros 1; UA Maracaibo 2 Mineros 1.
Sep 1: Mineros 0 Zamora 0; Trujillanos 4 Guaros 3.
Sep 2: El Vigia 1 Dep Italia 2; Caracas 2 Estudiantes 1; Dep Tachira 0 Carabobo 0; Estrella Roja 1 Monagas 1; Llaneros 1 Anzoategui 0; Union Lara 1 Portuguesa 1; Aragua 1 UA Maracaibo 1.
Sep 15: Guaros 1 Dep Tachira 0; Llaneros 1 Trujillanos 1.
Sep 16: Anzoategui 2 Caracas 3; Carabobo 0 El Vigia 1; Dep Italia 1 Estrella Roja 1; Estudiantes 1 Mineros 1; Monagas 0 Portuguesa 1; UA Maracaibo 2 Union Lara 1; Zamora 1 Aragua 0.

VENEZUELA – OPENING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Caracas	6	4	2	0	11	5	14
UA Maracaibo	6	3	3	0	9	6	12
Trujillanos	6	3	2	1	9	7	11
Anzoategui	6	3	1	2	10	6	10
El Vigia	6	3	0	3	6	8	9
Dep Tachira	5	2	2	1	9	4	8
Llaneros	6	2	2	2	7	6	8
Guaros	6	2	2	2	11	11	8
Estudiantes	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
Mineros	6	1	4	1	7	7	7
Dep Italia	6	1	4	1	5	5	7
Carabobo	6	2	1	3	4	6	7
Aragua	6	1	3	2	11	13	6
Zamora	6	1	3	2	4	6	6
Monagas	6	1	2	3	9	9	5
Union Lara	6	1	2	3	11	14	5
Estrella Roja	6	1	2	3	7	13	5
Portuguesa	5	1	1	3	4	7	4

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 24: Veracruz 2 Tigres 1.
Aug 25: Cruz Azul 3 Necaxa 0; Monterrey 1 Pumas UNAM 0; Guadalajara 3 Atlas 1; Morelia 1 Atlante 1; Pachuca 0 Santos 1.
Aug 26: Toluca 2 San Luis 1; America 4 Tecos UAG 1; Puebla 1 Jaguares 2.
Aug 29: Santos 2 Guadalajara 1; Cruz Azul 3 Toluca 1; San Luis 2 Veracruz 1; Morelia 2 America 1; Atlas 1 Atlante 2; Necaxa 1 Jaguares 1; Pumas UNAM 2 Puebla 2.
Sep 1: Veracruz 1 Cruz Azul 4; Jaguares 1 Pumas UNAM 2; Monterrey 1 Morelia 2; Guadalajara 1 Tigres 0; Pachuca 4 San Luis 1; Atlante 2 Santos 2.
Sep 2: Toluca 4 Necaxa 0; America 2 Atlas 1; Puebla 3 Tecos UAG 0.
Sep 5: Tigres 3 Pachuca 2.
Sep 7: Tecos UAG 2 Jaguares 1.
Sep 8: Cruz Azul 1 Pachuca 2; San Luis 0 Guadalajara 0; Morelia 2 Puebla 0; Tigres 2 Atlante 3; Atlas 2 Monterrey 2.
Sep 9: Toluca 2 Veracruz 1; Necaxa 1 Pumas UNAM 1; Santos 4 America 0.
Sep 14: Veracruz 1 Necaxa 3.
Sep 15: Jaguares 1 Morelia 1; Monterrey 1 Santos 1; Guadalajara 1 Cruz Azul 0; Pachuca 1 Toluca 2; Atlante 4 San Luis 3.
Sep 16: Pumas UNAM 2 Tecos UAG 0; America 1 Tigres 1; Puebla 1 Atlas 0.

MEXICO – OPENING – GROUP 1	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toluca	8	5	1	2	15	10	16
Pachuca	8	5	0	3	17	10	15
Pumas UNAM	8	2	4	2	9	8	10
Puebla	8	2	2	4	8	10	8
Jaguares	8	1	4	3	8	14	7
Tecos UAG	7	1	1	5	4	17	4

GROUP 2	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	8	6	2	0	17	6	20
Atlante	8	5	3	0	17	10	18
America	8	3	3	2	15	11	12
Monterrey	7	2	3	2	9	8	9
Veracruz	8	2	1	5	9	16	7
Atlas	8	0	2	6	7	14	2

GROUP 3	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morelia	8	4	3	1	11	8	15
Cruz Azul	8	4	0	4	13	10	12
Guadalajara	8	3	3	2	7	5	12
San Luis	8	3	2	3	13	14	11
Necaxa	8	3	2	3	12	16	11
Tigres	8	1	2	5	7	11	5

UNITED STATES

Aug 25: Chicago Fire 2 Kansas City Wizards 0; Houston Dynamo 1 Columbus Crew 1; New England Revolution 2 New York Red Bulls 1; Toronto FC 0 DC United 1.
Aug 26: Chivas USA 1 Real Salt Lake 0; Colorado Rapids 3 Los Angeles Galaxy 0.
Aug 29: Real Salt Lake 3 Kansas City Wizards 1.
Sep 1: Los Angeles Galaxy 1 Real Salt Lake 2; Houston Dynamo 1 Kansas City Wizards 1; FC Dallas 0 DC United 4; New York Red Bulls 1 Chicago Fire 0.
Sep 2: Columbus Crew 1 Colorado Rapids 1.
Sep 6: Chivas USA 2 DC United 2.
Sep 8: Los Angeles Galaxy 3 Colorado Rapids 1; FC Dallas 2 Toronto FC 0; Houston Dynamo 4 Real Salt Lake 3; Columbus Crew 0 Chicago Fire 1.
Sep 9: DC United 4 New England Revolution 2; Chivas USA 3 New York Red Bulls 0.
Sep 12: DC United 2 Real Salt Lake 1.
Sep 13: Chivas USA 3 Los Angeles Galaxy 0.
Sep 15: Chicago Fire 2 New York Red Bulls 2; Kansas City Wizards 3 Columbus Crew 2; New England Revolution 4 FC Dallas 2; Toronto FC 0 Real Salt Lake 0.
Sep 16: Los Angeles Galaxy 1 Houston Dynamo 3; Colorado Rapids 1 Chivas USA 1.
Sep 19: Real Salt Lake 2 Los Angeles Galaxy 2.

UNITED STATES – EASTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DC United	25	15	4	6	48	28	49
New England	25	13	6	6	43	34	45
New York	25	11	4	10	39	37	37
Kansas City	25	10	6	9	40	39	36
Chicago Fire	24	8	6	10	25	32	30
Columbus	25	6	10	9	29	34	28
Toronto	24	5	6	13	18	37	21

WESTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Houston	26	13	6	7	38	21	45
Chivas USA	24	13	5	6	39	22	44
FC Dallas	24	12	3	9	32	35	39
Colorado	25	7	8	10	26	30	29
Real Salt Lake	25	4	8	13	25	39	20
LA Galaxy	23	4	6	13	28	42	18

LEADING GOALSCORERS

19 Luciano Emilio (DC United)
15 Juan Pablo Angel (New York Red Bulls)
15 Eddie Johnson (Kansas City Wizards)

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Sep 1: FAR Rabat (Mor) 1 JS Kabylie (Alg) 1; Al Ittihad (Lby) 2 Etoile Sahel (Tun) 0.

GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Etoile Sahel	6	3	2	1	6	2	11
Al Ittihad	6	3	1	2	6	4	10
JS Kabylie	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
FAR Rabat	6	1	2	3	2	6	5

Group B

Sep 2: Al Ahly (Egy) 2 ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 0; Esperance (Tun) 1 Al Hilal (Sud) 1.

GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahly	6	4	0	2	8	4	12
Al Hilal	6	3	1	2	8	5	10
ASEC Abidjan	6	2	1	3	4	5	7
Esperance	6	1	2	3	2	8	5

Top two in each group qualified for semi-finals

ASIA

CHINA

Aug 25: Qingdao 0 Shenyang 1.
Aug 26: Dalian 2 Tianjin 2; Liaoning 1 Changchun 3; Zhejiang 1 Xian 1; Shandong 1 Henan 2; Wuhan 0 Shanghai 0; Shenzhen 0 Beijing 1.
Aug 31: Changchun 1 Qingdao 1.
Sep 1: Henan 0 Wuhan 0; Xian 4 Liaoning 1; Tianjin 1 Zhejiang 0; Beijing 4 Xiamen 1; Shanghai 4 Shenzhen 1.
Sep 2: Shenyang 0 Shandong 2.
Sep 5: Qingdao 1 Xian 1; Dalian 1 Beijing 1; Shenzhen 2 Henan 0; Shenyang 0 Changchun 0; Shandong 2 Wuhan 0; Xiamen 0 Shanghai 1; Liaoning 0 Tianjin 0.
Sep 8: Xian 0 Shenyang 0; Tianjin 4 Qingdao 0.
Sep 9: Changchun 0 Shandong 0; Henan 2 Xiamen 0; Wuhan 1 Shenzhen 0; Beijing 1 Zhejiang 0; Shanghai 1 Dalian 0.
Sep 15: Shandong 5 Shenzhen 0; Zhejiang 0 Shanghai 0; Dalian 3 Henan 1.
Sep 16: Liaoning 2 Beijing 3; Shenyang 1 Tianjin 1; Xiamen 2 Wuhan 1; Changchun 1 Xian 0.

CHINA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shandong	22	13	3	6	47	25	42
Changchun	22	12	6	4	34	19	42
Beijing	22	11	8	3	37	18	41
Tianjin	22	11	6	5	28	15	39
Shanghai	22	11	6	5	29	22	39
Dalian	21	10	7	4	27	21	37
Wuhan	21	7	6	8	21	24	27
Qingdao	21	7	5	9	25	31	26
Shenyang	22	6	8	8	13	19	26
Liaoning	21	7	4	10	19	30	25
Xian	21	3	10	8	18	23	19
Zhejiang	21	4	7	10	19	28	19
Henan	21	3	9	9	13	22	18
Shenzhen	21	4	6	11	14	31	18
Xiamen	20	3	5	12	16	32	14

JAPAN

Aug 25: Kashima Antlers 2 Yokohama FC 1; Urawa Reds 3 FC Tokyo 2; Kashiwa Reysol 1 JEF United 0; Kawasaki Frontale 4 Gamba Osaka 1; Jubilo Iwata 2 Ventforet Kofu 1; Nagoya Grampus Eight 5 Omiya Ardija 0; Oita Trinita 2 Vissel Kobe 0.
Aug 26: Yokohama F Marinos 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2; Albirex Niigata 0 Shimizu S-Pulse 2.
Aug 29: Omiya Ardija 1 Kashiwa Reysol 1; JEF United 6 Oita Trinita 0; Kawasaki Frontale 1 Nagoya Grampus Eight 1; Yokohama F Marinos 4 Jubilo Iwata 1; Ventforet Kofu 0 Albirex Niigata 1; Shimizu S-Pulse 1 Yokohama FC 0; Gamba Osaka 5 Kashima Antlers 1; Vissel Kobe 1 Urawa Reds 2; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0 FC Tokyo 5.
Sep 1: Kashima Antlers 4 Kawasaki Frontale 1; Urawa Reds 0 Omiya Ardija 1; FC Tokyo 3 Vissel Kobe 1; Yokohama FC 1 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2; Albirex Niigata 0 JEF United 1; Jubilo Iwata 0 Shimizu S-Pulse 1; Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Gamba Osaka 4.
Sep 2: Kashiwa Reysol 1 Yokohama F Marinos 0; Oita Trinita 4 Ventforet Kofu 1.
Sep 15: Omiya Ardija 0 Jubilo Iwata 2; JEF United 4 Vissel Kobe 2; Kawasaki Frontale 2 Oita Trinita 2; Yokohama FC 0 FC Tokyo 2; Shimizu S-Pulse 2 Ventforet Kofu 0; Nagoya Grampus Eight 3 Kashima Antlers 0; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2 Urawa Reds 4.
Sep 16: Albirex Niigata 1 Kashiwa Reysol 2; Gamba Osaka 0 Yokohama F Marinos 2.

JAPAN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Urawa Reds	25	16	7	2	46	22	55
Gamba Osaka	25	15	6	4	55	28	51
Shimizu SP	25	14	5	6	40	26	47
Kashima	25	13	6	6	39	30	45
Kashiwa	25	12	7	6	33	20	43
Yokohama FM	25	12	6	7	46	22	42
Albirex Niigata	25	12	5	8	38	34	41
Jubilo Iwata	25	12	1	12	42	46	37
Kawasaki	25	9	9	7	45	37	36
Grampus Eight	25	10	3	12	36	35	33
FC Tokyo	25	10	2	13	38	42	32
JEF United	25	9	4	12	38	39	31
Sanfrecce	25	8	5	12	37	55	29
Vissel Kobe	25	8	5	12	37	55	29
Oita Trinita	25	7	5	13	31	49	26
Omiya Ardija	25	4	9	12	16	34	21
Ventforet	25	6	3	16	27	49	21
Yokohama FC	25	3	2	20	17	53	11

SOUTH KOREA

Aug 25: Chunnam 2 Gwangju 0; Incheon 1 Jeju 1; Daegu 1 Suwon 2; Pohang 2 Songnam 1; Ulsan 0 Seoul 0; Gyeongnam 2 Busan 0.
Aug 26: Daejeon 2 Chonbuk 0.
Aug 28: Ulsan 2 Daegu 1; Suwon 1 Chunnam 0.
Aug 29: Gwangju 0 Jeju 2; Songnam 1 Gyeongnam 2; Chonbuk 0 Incheon 0; Busan 1 Daejeon 0; Seoul 3 Pohang 0.
Sep 1: Incheon 3 Gwangju 2; Gyeongnam 1 Seoul 0; Daegu 2 Pohang 2.
Sep 2: Chunnam 0 Ulsan 1; Chonbuk 1 Busan 1; Daejeon 1 Songnam 2; Jeju 0 Suwon 1.
Sep 15: Suwon 0 Gwangju 0; Ulsan 2 Jeju 2; Busan 0 Incheon 0; Songnam 2 Chonbuk 1; Seoul 2 Daejeon 1; Pohang 1 Chunnam 0.
Sep 16: Daegu 1 Gyeongnam 3.

SOUTH KOREA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Songnam	21	13	5	3	35	15	44
Suwon	21	13	5	3	32	19	44
Gyeongnam	21	11	4	6	36	24	37
Ulsan	21	9	9	3	26	19	36
Pohang	21	8	6	7	21	25	30
Chonbuk	21	8	5	8	29	26	29
Seoul	21	6	11	4	16	13	29
Incheon	21	7	8	6	23	23	29
Chunnam	21	6	7	8	20	21	25
Jeju	21	6	5	10	19	27	23
Daejeon	21	5	7	9	22	23	22
Busan	21	4	7	10	18	27	19
Daegu	21	4	5	12	27	38	17
Gwangju	21	2	6	13	11	35	12

The penalty stopper: Jose Reina

The Liverpool keeper was judged best by his fellow players

● BACKGROUND
"Obviously it's been to Pepe's advantage that he comes from a goalkeeping family. His father [Miguel] played at the top level [for Atletico Madrid] and he coached Pepe from an early age. This gave him a fantastic grounding in every aspect of the goalkeeper's art, including the all-important mental approach."

● PREPARATION
"Like all serious keepers, he works very hard at this part of the game on the training pitch and makes it his business to study the tendencies of potential opponents from the spot. He's intelligent and has the awareness to pick up on incidents during the game, store them away and then use them if he faces a penalty."

● CHARACTER
"It's absolutely necessary for a keeper to be in full control of his emotions when facing a penalty. All the pressure is on the kicker, and you don't want your keeper giving up this edge by losing his composure and focus. Pepe is a naturally calm person. It's not easy to put him off his game. He wants to be the master of the situation, and does it very well."

● INSTINCTS
"He has the priceless ability to be able to read what the kicker intends to do and follow his hunch with conviction."

● RECORD
"Pepe's always been good at stopping penalties, and this reputation definitely works in his favour. With every save, he gains more self-belief, while kickers get more nervous about trying to beat him."

Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez on Jose Reina

WHAT THEY SAID

VALERIEN ISMAEL (above)
(BAYERN MUNICH)
"What Ricardo [Betis] has done for Portugal in shoot-outs is phenomenal. Diving the right way isn't guesswork. With him, he really feels the direction the ball is going to go. It's uncanny."

GAEL GIVET
(MARSEILLE)
"Petr Cech [Chelsea]. A penalty is a test of the mental strength of the taker, and I'm sure many are put off by the sight of this giant waving his arms in the air before the kick."

ULRICH RAME
(BORDEAUX)
"From a technical point of view, Jose Reina [Liverpool] is great. He has a tremendous reach low down on either side, though you have to say he is often off his line when the kick is taken."

BART GOOR (below)
(ANDERLECHT)
"Like Peter Schmeichel or Toni Schumacher, Oliver Kahn [Bayern Munich] is a big guy who seems to fill the goal much more than most. Psychologically, he starts with an important edge."

LUDOVIC GIULY
(ROMA)
"Carlos Kameni [Espanyol] has amazingly quick reactions. He doesn't go too early, he waits until the last possible moment to make his move and then swoops with fantastic agility."

PETRI PASANEN
(WERDER BREMEN)
"Jens Lehmann [Arsenal] gets in the zone and exudes confidence. He seems to have this inner certainty that he will come out on top, and I reckon the kicker knows it, too."

DANIEL ZITKA (above)
(ANDERLECHT)
"Jose Reina looked so confident in the shoot-out against Chelsea in the Champions League semi-finals. He knows he has an above-average ability to anticipate where the ball is going."

TONY SYLVA
(LILLE)
"Edwin Van der Sar [Manchester United] has the best of all worlds; he's tall but light on his feet and quick to get down to cover the corners. He has a 'now you try and beat me' arrogance."

DAVID JAROLIM
(HAMBURG)
"Physically, Dida [Milan] is a big barrier, and he strikes me as a brilliant reader of the intentions of the kicker."

THE VOTES

2...Reina
1...Cech, Dida, Kahn, Kameni, Lehmann, Ricardo, Van der Sar

NEXT MONTH: THE BOX-TO-BOX MIDFIELDER
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